



Aalborg Universitet

AALBORG UNIVERSITY
DENMARK

Sustainabilities in the cultural economy

Ren, Carina Bregnholm; O'Dell, Tom; Budeanu, Adriana

Published in:
Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research

Publication date:
2014

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication from Aalborg University](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Ren, C. B., O'Dell, T., & Budeanu, A. (2014). Sustainabilities in the cultural economy. *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research*, 6, 907-912. http://www.cultureunbound.ep.liu.se/v6/cul14v6_Sustainabilities.pdf

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal -

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us at vbn@aub.aau.dk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Culture Unbound:
Journal of Current Cultural Research

Thematic Section:
Sustainabilities

Edited by

Carina Ren, Tom O'Dell & Adriana Budeanu

Extraction from Volume 6, 2014

Linköping University Electronic Press
Culture Unbound: ISSN 2000-1525 (online)
URL: <http://www.cultureunbound.ep.liu.se/>

© 2014 The Authors.

Culture Unbound, Extraction from Volume 6, 2014

Thematic Section: Sustainabilities

Carina Ren, Tom O'Dell & Adriana Budeanu

Sustainabilities in the Cultural Economy 907

Kathleen R. Smythe

An Historian's Critique of Sustainability 913

Helen Kopnina

Contesting 'Environment' Through the Lens of Sustainability: Examining Implications for Environmental Education (EE) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) 931

Lauren C. Johnson

Work at the Periphery: Issues of Tourism Sustainability in Jamaica 949

Christian Fuentes

Enacting Green Consumers: The Case of the Scandinavian Preppies 963

Sustainabilities in the Cultural Economy

By Carina Ren, Tom O'Dell & Adriana Budeanu

How does sustainability manifest itself when examined from within the broad field of the cultural economy? This was the pivotal question of the call for contributors originally sent out for this special issue of *Culture Unbound* on *Sustainabilities*. The reason for “multiplying” the concept of sustainability was a wish to critically address and examine its multiple applications and tensions through different disciplinary lenses. By looking at how the three pillars of “people, planet and profit” intertwine, or as also noted in several of the contributions, remain detached, we were eager to capture and address the concept not as a coherent entity, but rather as multiple – as a matter of *sustainabilities*.

As sustainability has become an increasingly recognized or even essential label, some would say add-on, for tourism and retail products, corporate and educational profiles, development policies and place brands, the concept is also becoming increasingly (or at least more visibly) entangled in paradoxical and controversial relationships, which render clear that it is far from an uncontested or easily applicable term. Also, multimedia exposure reveal time and again the difficulties or ambiguities, for instance, in producing, tracing and trusting organic produce or “green” retail products, responsibly investing public and private funds, or in maintaining a balanced triple bottom line. The question is whether the difficulty of handling the concept is equivalent to its failure. Is what we are seeing in the media an early sign of its future disappearance? Are the current “cracks” a sign of the concept’s pliability or a sign of its collapse?

With this special issue, we wish to contribute to the ongoing interrogations into the usability and value of sustainability as a concept. What does it actually do to organize or focus a common effort for the people, profit and planet which it claims to include into its equation? Ultimately, we hope that the ongoing investigations and testing of its manifold and disputed features, uses and manifestations, its pliability, continuous reshaping and boundaries may lead to new ways of transgressing the limits of this notion so widely (mis)used in today’s society.

The Contributions

The present special issue is composed of four articles, which all revolve around the concept of sustainability. However, and nicely fitting the special issue title of *Sustainabilities*, they do so very differently. While three of the articles devote particular attention to its linkage to environmental issues (Kopnina; Smythe; and

Johnson), it's attachments to questions of economy (all be it as an aspect of the social) (Smythe) and it's socio-cultural implications (Johnson), a fourth (Fuentes) is concerned with how green consumers are enacted through a sustainability centered marketing strategy. In the following, we will introduce the contributions and reflect on how the contributions as a whole inform us on the concept of sustainability,

In the article *A Historian's Critique of Sustainability*, Smythe proposes – as the title suggests, to critically challenge “the three-pronged diagram that integrates economic, social and environmental factors of planning and decision-making” (p. 914). Through the classic humanistic approach of examining origins, in this case of the sustainability framework, she shows how scholars and professionals are more bound “by past formulations of society, economies and the environment than they realize” (p. 914f). In her critique of the sustainability model, Smythe calls for a new holistic sustainability paradigm, which does not isolate the economy, but rather integrates it back into the social, where – she argues - it rightly belongs.

In *Contesting “Environment” Through the Lens of Sustainability: Examining implications for environmental education (EE) and education for sustainable development (ESD)*, Kopnina reversely discusses the implications of seeing not the economy, but the environment as a social construction, that is a culturally and socially mediated concept. Showing how this approach limits the understanding of nature to its human perception, she further elaborates on how nature is commodified and rendered instrumental in environmental education. As she argues, education must be re-instated as being for and not of nature, in order to sustain nature.

By the third article, *Work at the Periphery? Issues of Tourism Sustainability in Jamaica*, the alert reader begins to discern why sustainability has been so difficult to delimit or define, as Johnson directs our attention to the third “leg” of sustainability, namely the social, hereby completely shifting the perspective upon sustainability. Johnson does so by means of an ethnographic exploration of the impact of the all-inclusive resort on local communities and economies. By focusing on tourism related local impacts and responses, which specific communities stand confronted with, Johnson seeks to address the contested term of sustainable tourism from a socio-culturally or local economic point of view.

After a three tiered tour de force, sustainability stands before us as a highly malleable – some would say ambivalent, concepts as they all question, as Kopnina puts it, “whether the objective of balancing (the) social, economic and environmental triad is achievable” (p. 933). In the fourth contribution, Fuentes shifts the attention away from the difficult questions of defining the concept or balancing its components through a performative approach to the concept. He does so by asking not what sustainability is, but rather how it works, in the present case as part of the enactment of the green consumer. Through an analysis of the sustainability strategies by which so-called green retailers market their products, Fuentes

describes the coming together of a knowledgeable green connoisseur, a green hedonist in search of the good life. This consumer, as noted by Fuentes, is neither rebel nor activist. In the described case, the consumer is not political, but rather a pleasure seeker with a green conscience.

As argued by Smythe in the present volume, simply bringing society, economy and environment “together in a polygon has not created and cannot create sustainability” (p. 915). The current contributions display great disparity in academically addressing and describing the polygon, for instance by turning to deep ecology (Kopnina) or to the social deconstruction of economy as external to society. However, all contributors seem to agree that sustainability will not do in addressing the serious challenges which it was conceived as an answer to.

In spite of their notable differences in academic backgrounds, methodologies and field of study, the four contributors point to the concepts’ political substance (or lack thereof). When Smythe asserts that “concerns for both people and planet calls for thinking more deeply and rigorously about the interconnectedness between people and the environment” (p. 926), such concerns are not strictly “academic” as noted by Kopnina in regards to her discussion of deep ecology. They are also political. Therefore, as Fuentes notes, it is vital to study cultural phenomena such as the green consumer, because “by determining whom the green consumer is/should be we are also to some extent determining how sustainability is to be approached” (p. 974).

It is this struggle over how sustainability is approached – or perhaps rather how sustainability multiplies into sustainabilities in a variety of contexts and practices, which needs to be continually addressed by scholars. As such, our wish in opening this call for papers was not to raise attention to the lack of clear definitions of what sustainability *is*, but rather to consider how we may come to terms and deal with its inability to perform as a coherent concept.

As editors to this volume we had asked contributors to reflect on sustainability in relation to the cultural economy. We received over twenty proposals and we chose four submissions for publication. But we still miss a very different perspective on what sustainability can imply, which none of the contributions directly addressed, although Smythe’s discussion of the human spirit (and human qualities such as truth, beauty and goodness) does approach. That is, as we reflect upon sustainability we are surprised, dare we say worried, by the degree to which this cultural economy focuses upon very public, and rather impersonal relationships to the subject. Why don’t we frame sustainability more in very personal and emotional terms? In a time in which stress, burn-out, divorce, and feelings of inadequacy are so prevalent, why aren’t these issues framed more often in terms of sustainability. How do we sustain love in a time so preoccupied with career success and economic return, because while very many people succeed in doing this, very many people do not. The triple helix which so many scholars interested in sustainability circle around is bound to the three “p’s” “people, planet and profit”. All too

often this is framed as the “social, the ecological and the economic”. But the magic of life is so often bound to the realm of the emotional. How can we better understand sustainability on a private plane between individuals? This is also a cultural economy of affect in need of further attention. As editors for this volume we wonder why discussions of sustainability remain so anchored in discussions of rationality, choice, morality, and public engagement. In the literature there exists a field of study focused upon the cultural economy of the emotional and private plane, not least developed by scholars such as Hochschild (2003; 2012), but perhaps it would be fruitful to more explicitly develop this field in relation to the question of sustainability.

The contributions to this volume relate critically to the notion of sustainability, pointing to the limits of the concept, but the case may be that sustainability as a subject needs to be focused much more on a personal, emotional and thereby cultural plane. If we can’t save the world (and the authors to this volume and so many others are in agreement that discussions of sustainability seem to be ineffective at best in moving in this direction) maybe it’s time to sink the bar, and reflect upon the cultural economy of sustainability and personal relations. That would imply shifting the focus of discussions of sustainability from the political and economic plane to the personal and social plane. To this end we would argue for a need to follow Smythe’s line of argumentation, and even push it further, reframing sustainability not in terms of the economic, environmental and social, but removing the first two of these three legs upon which sustainability has been framed over the past 50 years (or at least diminishing the focus upon them), and adding a new one... the emotional/personal – and testing the premises upon which sustainability might be framed, not as a project of political strategy or rational choice, but as one of emotional orientation and cultural disposition.

An introduction is not the place to fully develop such a position, but perhaps we can encourage readers and other scholars to take this as a point of departure for further contemplation and debate. In closing, we would like to thank the contributors and the editorial team at *Culture Unbound* for joining us on the journey that completing this special issue of *Culture Unbound* implied, and look forward to following the debates on sustainability that will follow in the years to come. We are keen to learn what may come next in the common endeavor to develop appropriate and useful concepts and tools to create a world – and worldly practices – accommodating people, culture, nature, and the realm of affective engagement as inclusively as possible.

Adriana Budeanu is an associate professor at Copenhagen Business School doing research in the area of sustainable tourism and international business, sustainable consumption and lifestyles, corporate social responsibility in tourism supply chains, and sustainable service innovation. Her most recent research includes

studies on tourist consumption and environmental awareness, and sustainability in social media. E-mail: abu.int@cbs.dk

Tom O'Dell is Professor of Ethnology in the Department of Arts and Cultural Sciences at Lund University, Sweden. Among his previous publications are *Culture Unbound: Americanization and Everyday Life in Sweden* (Nordic Academic Press, 1997), *Experiencescapes: Tourism, Culture, and Economy* (Copenhagen Business School Press, 2005, together with Peter Billing), and *Spas and the Cultural Economy of Hospitality, Magic and the Senses* (Nordic Academic Press, 2012). E-mail: thomas.o_dell@kultur.lu.se

Carina Ren is associate professor in tourism cultures and cultural innovation at Aalborg University Copenhagen. She has worked on applying material semiotics and performativity to the study of tourism, the tourist destination and nation branding endeavours, focussing among other things on the use and application of of culture and values and on sustainability/climate issues. E-mail: ren@cgs.aau.dk

References

- Hochschild, Arlie (2003): *The Commercialization of Intimate Life: Notes from Home and Work*, Berkeley: University of California Press
Hochschild, Arlie (2012): *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

An Historian's Critique of Sustainability

By Kathleen R. Smythe

Abstract

The most common word-based image of sustainability is a balanced three-way relationship between the environment, society and the economy, sometimes portrayed as a triangle, sometimes as a Venn diagram. The idea is that if you consider all three equally you will have a sustainable outcome. After twenty years of use, however, it has yet to yield a radically different approach to policy, planning or business. The combination of abundant and cheap energy and an emphasis on production has resulted in the separation of economics from both social and bio-physical worlds. The long-established practice of isolating the three elements makes re-associating them difficult. Even if it were possible, a more holistic approach to human welfare, both in relation to the natural and social worlds, is likely to bring societies closer to sustainability. The suggestion is that a framework that starts from the premise of providing meaningful work and meaningful lives will support the flourishing of other species as well as the human species.

Keywords: Sustainable development, Brundtland Commission, poverty, energy

Introduction

Sustainability is a broad term that suggests where those concerned with planetary welfare might fruitfully direct their attention (Jacob 1994: 241). The most common framework for sustainability is a three-pronged diagram that integrates economic, social and environmental factors for planning and decision-making. This diagram, sometimes a triangle, sometimes a Venn diagram, highlights the need to keep multiple priorities in mind in order to achieve sustainability in a variety of contexts, such as education, business, human rights law, and urban planning (Elkington 1994: 90-100; McGoldrick 1996: 796-818; Elkington 1997; Davidson 2009: 607-608).¹ Such a framework has been in use for more than twenty years and has yet to yield a markedly different approach to constructing human societies to ensure the long-term welfare of the human and other species.



Fig. 1: The Sustainability Triangle

Most, even those critiquing our current systems and ways of operating, accept the triangle, including the isolation of economics from the social and environmental legs, as the best operational mechanism for achieving a more sustainable future. For example, authors of *The Resilience Imperative*, Michael Lewis and Pat Conaty, argue that a steady state economy is the solution to more resilient societies, emphasizing the primacy of the economic leg (Lewis & Conaty 2012: 2, 33). Ecological economists, too, want to include the resources and goods derived from our ecological systems to our economic reckoning but not necessarily change the fact that one leg is economics (Lewis & Conaty 2012: 332).

The Problem: Isolating Economics

Such widespread acceptance of the sustainability concept and lack of significant change after decades suggest a need to re-examine the origins of the sustainability framework for clues to explain its inutility. How the current framework (or the triangle) came to be and why it has been unsuccessful is the focus of this article. I will argue two things. The first is that one of the primary hindrances to achieving sustainability, or the associated idea of sustainable development, is that scholars and professionals are more bound by past formulations of society, economics and

the environment than they realize. For decades now, and before the three-part framework was developed in the early 1980s, these facets have been considered in isolation. It is particularly important that economics has been isolated from social and environmental considerations. Simply bringing them together in a polygon has not created and cannot create sustainability.

Unlike previous economists, such as the French Physiocrats, current economists dismiss societies' relationship to the biophysical and social worlds as inconsequential, making integration impossible to achieve (Hall & Klitgaard 2012: 104). Economics is but one prism for understanding society, and prevailing neoliberal economics is a particularly narrow one. As economist Karl Polanyi and others have claimed, economics is a societal construct, too; it does not exist outside of human societies (Daly & Farley 2011: 7). Economist Kenneth Boulding wrote decades ago that, "there is no such thing as economics, only social science applied to economic problems" (Lewis & Conaty 2012: 332). And changes in economics render changes across society.

The weaknesses and faults of current economic thought are more obvious in the developing world than in the industrialized world from whence they came. As the late professor of development sociology Thomas Lyson wrote, "the 'seams' of the neoclassical [economic] viewpoint are most evident" in developing countries (Lyson 2004: 24). One reason for this is that the field of economics and the assumptions built into it stem from a Northern, "successful" perspective. Such views have been built, in part, on the South's heavy economic work of providing cheap resources and cheap labor for the benefit of the North (Hall & Klitgaard 2012: 64).

Africans' experiences with colonialism and development bring into sharp relief what happens when a society or country is examined primarily through the lens of economics, as extractive colonial governments did. The attendant consequences in religion, politics, and culture were not always anticipated and often complicated. For example, a focus on cash crops for export, such as coffee and tea, meant that men who had either cooperated with women in food production or played a secondary role now had government-sanctioned access to agricultural technology and the cash associated with export crops, while women and children were left as subsistence producers. A strong gender divide in terms of access to the cash economy has prevailed ever since in many African societies, as has a concomitant sense of gender identity shaped by access to the market economy (Gilbert and Reynolds 2012: 286-307; Mathabane 1987; M'Mbugu-Schelling 1987).²

Another more recent African example demonstrates how challenging it is to embrace all three aspects of sustainability equally. When the improved seeds, pesticides, and biotechnology associated with the Green Revolution increased yields in places like Mexico and India during the 1960s, such changes did not occur in Africa. In the twenty-first century, a number of development organizations, including the Gates Foundation, have decided that the Green Revolution is part of

the solution to Africa's economic woes (Blaustein 2008: 8-14). Yet, one of the results of the Green Revolution decades ago was persistent social inequalities as well as environmental degradation. Without attention to this reality, the results will be the same in Africa. Thus, the Green Revolution will likely increase production, the economic side of the triangle, at the risk of little improvement on the other two sides of the triangle (Kerr 2012: 213-229). Moreover, as both these examples demonstrate, the disruption of subsistence agriculture has been a chief attribute of development, one that sustainability has done little to disrupt. Moving people away from subsistence production has been a long-standing desire.

Why, given our understanding of such global events over the past century, would we isolate economic ideas from other important social constructs, such as household, community, politics or religion in the pursuit of sustainability (Littig & Griesler 2005: 67; Davidson 2009: 616)?³ The pursuit of sustainable development (a derivative of the triangle most clearly articulated in the UN document *Our Common Future*) has not eradicated poverty or promoted a more sustainable use of global resources (Jacob 1994: 239). Part of the challenge that the sustainability movement has faced up to this point is that it has isolated economics as deserving special recognition and attention in sustainability decisions.

Because of the pervasiveness of the isolation of economics from the environment and society, the current framework is not the best representation of human welfare or prospects. This, then, is the second argument of the paper. As a species, there are fundamental needs and relationships integral to human thriving. Reframing sustainability on the basis of holistic human welfare, both in relation to the natural and social worlds, is likely to bring societies closer to sustainability. It also begins to integrate the anthropocentric and intrinsic value views of the natural world, arguing that optimal human welfare is consonant with rich, diverse ecosystems.

A History of the Triangle

Isolating Economics

The sustainability triangle captures a history of ideas—first that economics became isolated from the natural world and society and, then, that policymakers and politicians sought to restore the connections. There is one foundational reason for economics' isolation from the environment and society, paving the way for the reign of neoliberal economics, when economists and politicians believed that if you got the economics right, particularly production, then other societal interests would follow. The foundational piece is the unprecedented economic growth associated with the last two centuries, and the twentieth century particularly, made possible largely from abundant and cheap supplies of fossil fuels. These trends brought renewed interest in markets, an idea that was reinforced with the fall of

European communist states in the late 1980s. Then at least two other developments, a concern for poverty and environmental degradation, brought scholars and policymakers to the point of trying to re-integrate economics, society and the environment.

The Industrial Revolution was possible due to the concentrated energy of coal that released people and animals from a variety of tasks, making work more efficient. Economic development leapfrogged again with the commercial use of petroleum. Liquid fossil fuels were discovered in large quantities in Pennsylvania in the middle of the nineteenth century. At the time of discovery, there seemed to be little use for the black gold, as historian Brian C. Black calls it (Black 2012: 20-30). Yet, a decline in whale oil production, abundant quantities of crude petroleum, and an entrepreneurial capitalist spirit created an industry by the end of the nineteenth century. "By the 1920s, the nearly useless product had become the lifeblood of national security to the United States and Great Britain," Black writes (Black 2012: 59). Such dependence led to an alliance between the oil tycoons and the U.S. government, resulting in an oil economy that relied on transnational extraction and refining (Black 2012: 67-93). Historian John McNeill calculates that "we have probably deployed more energy since 1900 than in all of human history" (Black 2012: 10).

Such abundant, cheap energy is an historical anomaly and, according to systems ecologist Charles A.S. Hall and economist Kent A. Klitgaard, lured most economists and politicians away from the biophysical foundations of our economy. In *Energy and The Wealth of Nations* Hall and Klitgaard write, "The only effective and large-scale technology that so far has been 'invented' for capturing and storing that energy is photosynthesis." We use products of photosynthesis for all of our needs. Fossil fuels, ancient plant material, are no exception. All the theories that dominate economic thought today were developed on the upslope of the Hubbert curve, during a time characterized by the enormously increasing availability, and declining cost of obtaining, energy," Hall and Klitgaard proffer (Black 2012: 101-2). The Hubbert curve is Shell Oil executive M. King Hubbert's depiction of the rate of global oil production with a peak occurring some time around 1970.

One result of the spread of the use of cheap hydrocarbon energy was that economists stopped worrying about the limits of solar flow and the limits of the biophysical world, essentially ignoring energy, and, instead, turned to social explanations for economic problems, focusing on production and wealth generation (Black 2012: 71, 97-8). In fact, even though abundant, oil and minerals remain the means by which modern societies add value through labor and capital to produce goods. To ignore it, as Herman Daly notes, is "nonsensical" (Daly 2008: 513).

After decades of access to cheap fuel, a belief in endless growth came to be government policy through Reaganomics or neoliberal economics in the United States, similar policies in Great Britain, and the imposition of such policies glob-

ally through institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (Ferguson 2009: 172-3). This was the second wave of unregulated markets in the twentieth century, the first occurring between the 1890s and 1920s (Lewis & Conaty 2012: 39). After the Great Depression, economics and economic decision-making earned high prestige in both the United States and Great Britain, as governments sought to control and revive their economies both in the 1930s and after World War II (Daly & Farley 2011: xix-xx). But the emphasis for decades (between the 1930s and 1970s) was on Keynesian economics with a concern for employment and a role for the state in economic planning. Several decades after World War II there was a return to unregulated markets as faith in government planning, both in capitalist and communist countries waned. While both communism (or state-planned economies) and capitalism placed value on extracting resources at faster and faster rates to fuel economic growth, capitalism favored free markets rather than planned economies. With the fall of communism in the late 1980s, greater faith was placed on the unregulated market as the arbiter for economic production, emphasizing economics' disconnect from both environment and society.

Since the 1980s, in both the North and the South, the hegemonic idea was that if societies reduced government and encouraged free markets, more people would have more goods and better lives. This was neoliberalism, a belief in maximizing utility (Jacob 1994: 241). Neoliberal economics under Margaret Thatcher in Great Britain was marked by a twenty percent reduction in the civil service during her tenure (Kavanagh 1997: 123). By the time Thatcher left office in 1990, two-thirds of publicly owned assets had been sold. The Conservative government also cut the income tax rate from 33 to 25 percent (Kavanagh 1997: 127). The era was marked by declining labor union influence and middle class influence in the form of increasing control over public school and university teachers (Kavanagh 1997: 128-9). In the United States, the airline industry was deregulated, welfare reduced, and private investment encouraged. Deregulation of the airline industry, meant to promote competition, soon left the top five airlines controlling seventy-one percent of the market and able to charge exorbitant fees on some routes and for some seats (Kuttner 1989). In addition, during eight years in office, Reagan cut social welfare deeply and implemented policies that resulted in both unemployment and a more nimble workforce as well as the closure of a number of companies and a more modern industrial sector (Aho & Levinson 1988: 10-25). The various policies weakened labor union strength, workers' wages and security.

Labor, people really, became secondary to narrowly conceived economic policy. Keynesian economics had foregrounded employment as an important element of economic policy. After the 1970s wages and corporate growth and success became disconnected, except at the upper ranks of leadership, as prevailing theorists argued that the best possible way to improve the overall global economy was by promoting policies that favored production, not full employment or fair wages

(Hall & Klitgaard 2012: 181-9). A stronger focus on the market masked “non-economic and non-market forms of human relationships” (Keys 1998: 80).

The last five decades have been marked by divergent paths for many industrialized countries (many in the North) and less-industrialized, usually previously colonized countries in the South. Yet, citizens in both places have faced similar policies. In the South, the 1980s was marked by “structural adjustment,” including budget austerity and market liberalization (Rist 2008: 171). The results, in many cases, in both the North and the South, resulted in adjusting well being downwards to meet the “imperatives of the market economy” (Rist 2008: 173). In response, in the South non-governmental organizations and the United Nations sought to ameliorate the consequences of these economic policies through community-based and small-scale ventures (Rist 2008: 173). Across the globe, economics was no longer integrated into society as a source of employment or as a system that needed governmental checks or balances to ensure citizens’ welfare. If checks and balances did exist, they came from civil society.

A Concern for and Construction of Material Poverty (and Devaluing of Manual Labor)

By the 1980s, economists and policy-makers had largely dis-connected economics from both its environmental and social foundations. And the costs of efforts in these directions had been clear to some for decades as social movements and government policies responded to the inequality, injustice and degradation such beliefs were causing. Since the 1950s, a view of the world—of rich and poor countries—came to dominate in the North. Dividing the world into “poor” and “rich” has its origins in the post-World War II era (Bertaux, Smythe, and Crable 2012: 34-45). President Truman’s inaugural address in 1948 is an oft-cited early public statement of such a belief system. In it he identifies the “ancient enemies” of “hunger, misery, and despair” as problems to be overcome. Hunger had been a long-standing concern, as Thomas Malthus’ oft-cited projections in 1798 indicate (Hall & Klitgaard 2012: 208). Through much of the nineteenth century, hunger was a specter for many (Hall & Klitgaard 2012: 212). Truman saw technology and international cooperation as means to eradicate global poverty. He invited other countries “to pool their technological resources” to benefit peoples elsewhere as “our commerce with other countries expands as they progress industrially and economically” (American Experience). Cheap fossil fuels were leading to spectacular agricultural production rates, a thousand times greater than those associated with slash and burn agriculture of the tropics, suggesting that hunger could be eradicated (Mazoyer & Roudart 2006). It seemed clear to many that economic and social welfare could be joined. Yet, this formulation of poverty, reliant upon increasing use of technology for its eradication, has done little to bridge the gap.

Misery and despair are likely a reference to difficult, labor-intensive work (often for subsistence rather than market production) and the rudimentary housing

and clothing conditions often associated with it, conditions that most in the United States were only a generation or two away from when Truman gave his call to action. He called upon the international community to aid and develop the less fortunate, decolonizing states to overcome such enemies (McMichael 2008: 274).

Yet, Truman's and others' promotion of development constructed poverty or "modernized poverty" by devaluing subsistence economies (McMichael 2008: 276-7). Walt Rostow's "big push" of the 1960s and Jeffrey Sachs's ladder of development of the 2000s are two examples (Rostow 1960). Bill McKibben describes Sachs' idea:

[It is a] progression of development that moves from subsistence agriculture toward light manufacturing and urbanization, and on to high tech services. You begin with peasants who "typically know to build their own houses, grow and cook food, tend to animals, and make their own clothing. They are therefore construction workers, veterinarians, and agronomists, and apparel manufacturers. They do it all, and their abilities are deeply impressive." But they are also "deeply inefficient," because "Adam Smith pointed out to us that specialization, where each of us learns just one of these skills, leads to a general improvement of everybody's well-being" (McKibben 2010: 163).⁴

In this view, specialization and reliance on the market economy are key to individual and societal success. The social leg of the triangle becomes primarily focused on the eradication of material poverty, feeding the notion that economics is more important than any other aspect of society.

But, as Sach's view acknowledges, if only implicitly, development leads not only to a materially more complex lifestyle but also to one in which there is more vulnerability, both for individuals and societies, as they come to rely on the marketplace for most of their needs rather than satisfying some of them through their own labor and relationships. This is not a new realization. Historian William McNeill offers, "catastrophe is the underside of the human condition—a price we pay for being able to alter natural balances and to transform the face of the earth through collective effort and the use of tools." The better humans become at controlling nature, the more vulnerable humans are to catastrophe (Foster 2011: 1). McNeill's view that economic exploitation through technology leads to endemic catastrophe is different than that of the Brundtland Commission as will be seen; in their view poverty leads to endemic catastrophe.

As sociologist Phillip McMichael argues, the "have/have-not" division was not only created by Northern power but has been perpetuated by it as well. Thus, the WTO (World Trade Organization) promotes corporate agriculture, driving farmers off their land, while the World Bank seeks to eradicate poverty, a poverty that is most readily apparent in urban slums, where failing farmers flee. "Then its [the WTO's] success (abundant commercial food) is simultaneously its failure (a billion slum dwellers)," he claims (McMichael 2008: 274). Thus, capitalist industry promotes dislocation and modernized poverty while social interests seek to ameliorate the conditions. Economic and societal interests work at cross-purposes.

Ending hunger, misery and despair are not strictly economic enterprises but because they have been promoted as such, a truncated version of human needs, featuring access to wages and goods in the marketplace, has been promoted.

The Construction of Social Poverty and Valuing Technology

Within neoliberal economics there is an almost unassailable belief in technology as intrinsically good. There are two relevant consequences of this belief. The first is an undue emphasis on *ease* of access to food, water and shelter that often gets translated into the ability to reduce hard labor and hard living and sometimes a rationale for destruction of subsistence economies. The assumption was (and is) that those in subsistence economies “could not live life fully,” as Gustavo Esteva has noted (Keys 1998: 83). While the industrialized West has realized access to water and health care and other benefits by pursuing technological and economic development, this does not mean ours is the only path to such achievements nor does it mean that such development has not had significant costs (Borgmann 1984: 103). Pursuit of technology has led to disengagement from community and dissatisfaction with work, or diminution of the human spirit, due to reduction in connection to people and the Earth. Philosopher Albert Borgmann laments the contraction of expertise and expansion of unskilled labor, for example, as a result of promoting comfort, mobility, and access (Borgmann 1984: 52-120). A second consequence is the increased vulnerability discussed earlier. In both cases, a balance between individuals’ ability to meet some of their needs and elimination of backbreaking work is not part of general economic discussions. Sustainability has inherited a narrow concern for material welfare that has excluded other means of promoting material welfare as well as consideration of social welfare.

A Concern for the Environment

The other movement since the 1960s, in addition to a concern for poverty, has been an environmental movement. Political scientist Glenn Ricketts seeks the roots of sustainability in both the environmental movement and other social movements of the 1960s and early 1970s. Both were a response to the fast-paced economic and social changes wrought by cheap fuels. While “conservationism began long before the 1960s, ... its environmentalist incarnation arose with the publication of ... *Silent Spring* in 1962,” he writes (Ricketts 2010: 20-21). One of the ways in which environmentalism is distinguishable from sustainability is that the former rarely saw or acted upon interconnections between environmental and social injustice, preferring to focus on the environment, while others worked on issues of race and gender, or systemic injustices due to lack of access to power. The environmental movement’s links to the feminist movement and environmental justice, among others, helped pave the way for sustainability (Ricketts 2010: 38-40). “When it did emerge, the sustainability doctrine offered a way to synthe-

size environmentalism with civil rights themes and anti-poverty programs,” Ricketts continues (Ricketts 2010: 35). With Ricketts’ analysis, it is clear how heretofore disparate facets, society and the environment, were considered together.

A Concern for Poverty and Environment – the Brundtland Commission

In the early 1980s, with a concern for social equity (particularly poverty), the environment and a commitment to endless growth, an international team wrote the seminal document for sustainability and its closely associated idea, sustainable development.⁵ In 1983 the General Assembly of the United Nations asked the Secretary-General to appoint a commission on the environment and development. The Prime Minister of Norway, Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland became Chair of the Commission. The members, politicians and environmental experts from various countries, published their report, *Our Common Future*, in 1988. They recognized that human activities, particularly ones associated with development, were destroying the environment but, at the same time, poorer peoples, certainly deserved more development. They sought to re-integrate what had become and still was becoming an isolated perspective on economics, human welfare and environmental sustainability. The triangle placed all three in relation and carved out a space in the center for sustainability. Sustainable development was reinvigorated. But the model was deeply flawed because the dominant economic system was not flexible enough to accommodate the holistic connected thinking necessary for complete re-integration.

In this intellectual and geopolitical environment, The Commission wrote:

Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable—to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The concept of sustainable development does imply limits—not absolute limits but limitations imposed by the present state of technology and social organization on environmental resources and by the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities. But technology and social organization can both be managed and improved to make way for a new era of economic growth. The Commission believes that widespread poverty is no longer inevitable. Poverty is not only an evil in itself, but sustainable development requires meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to fulfill their aspirations for a better life. A world in which poverty is endemic will always be prone to ecological and other catastrophes (Rist 2008: 181).

In this passage, the emphasis is on more development (through better technology and social organization) in order to eradicate poverty. A gesture toward the environment and limits was all that was achieved likely due to a faith in the market economy and a primary concern for material poverty (Rist 2008: 194). Here and throughout the document, the focus is on realizing economic concerns, justified in part at least by social concerns (Rist 2008: 182). For example, in the Introduction, the Commission writes, “Our report...is not a prediction of ever increasing environmental decay, poverty and hardship.... We see instead the possibility for a new era of economic growth, one that must be based on policies that sustain and ex-

pand the environmental resource base” (*Our Common Future*¹¹).⁶ The message is that human technology will overcome environmental limits for the sake of development. Finally, *Our Common Future* concludes that ending material poverty is the only way to ensure societal sustainability, while others have long been concerned that societal vulnerability is due as much if not more to investment in endless growth without concern for limits.

The triangle, born of concern with current practices, sought a way to bridge economics long-standing isolation, but instead it reinforced the autonomy of the economy from the two systems of which it is an inherent part because the value system under which the authors and their host countries operated was not substantially different than what had come before (Jacob 1994: 241). Therefore, the resulting framework did not subsume economics back into the environment and society.⁷ It has, however, brought warranted attention to the challenges inherent in halting environmental degradation. A number of conferences followed in the next decade, including the “Earth Summit” in Rio de Janeiro and UN Framework Conventions on Climate Change and Biological Diversity all in 1992. As a result, most development projects seek to understand the environmental implications of their plans.⁸

Yet, weaknesses of the formulation are clear to many who have sought to clarify sustainability and sustainable development in order to implement beneficent concrete actions. Development studies scholar Gilbert Rist has noted that “humanity has the ability to make development sustainable” is a circular argument, “assuming as true what has to be demonstrated,” which is particularly troubling because the concept is not accompanied by policy guidance (Rist 2008: 180). Ecological economist Herman Daly has called for a distinction between development and growth. He defines the former as “qualitative improvement” and the latter as “quantitative physical increase” (Daly 2008: 513). For Daly, sustainable development would mean “qualitative improvement in design, technology, efficiency, and ordering of priorities... without quantitative increase in the entropic throughput from environmental sources to sinks” (Daly 2008: 513-14). This distinction is useful because it moves closer to a means by which human societies could seek both reduction of poverty and ease pressure on environmental resources. It is a move that Professor Merle Jacob of the Lund University School of Economics and Management also supports but she warns that such a re-definition of economic policy for sustainability would require a new framework for sustainable development as it is a radical departure from previous assumptions (1994).

Both Daly’s and Jacob’s critiques recognize that since the 1988 document growth replaced concern for human rights. The United Nations’ annual country reports for its Human Development Index (begun in 1990) recognizes other ways of improving human welfare and development beyond growth. The index includes school enrollment/literacy and life expectancy, among other factors. Economist and Nobel laureate Amartya Sen’s definition of development is a measure of a

people's ability to make choices about their own futures (Sen 1999). In these conceptualizations, human welfare is broader than material welfare.

Such notions get closer to a more holistic vision of what humanity might be but they don't sufficiently tackle the underlying premise of development as proportional to material comfort and ease of labor or, to put it more strongly, that "poverty is an evil in itself" (Rist 2008: 182). A more successful sustainability model might start with who humans are and what they need to thrive. Then with a more realistic view of the limited utility of technology and economics' ability to meet human needs, the work of crafting a new model can begin.

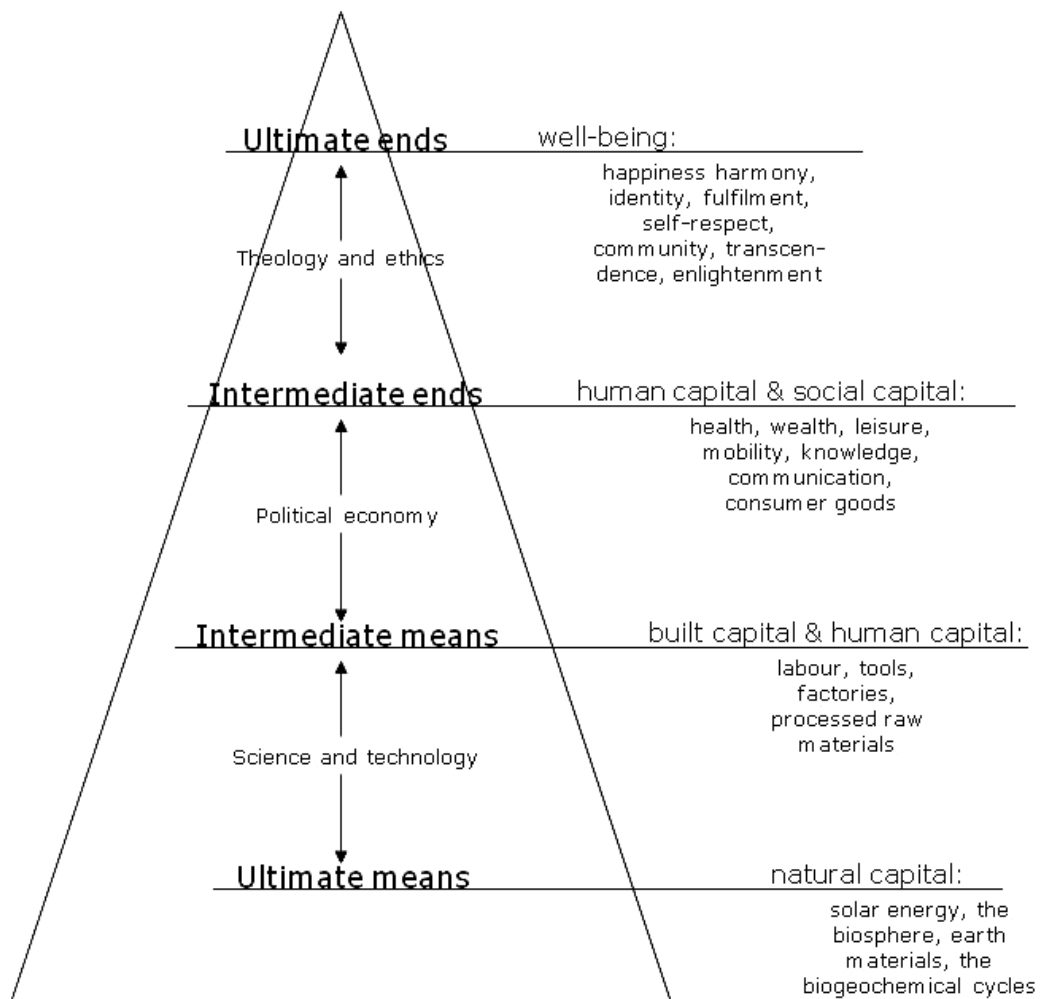
Toward a New Framework: Meaningful Work and Meaningful Lives

The first step is to be explicit about holistic human needs rather than simply material ones. Hall and Klitgaard offer a place to begin. "To be sustainable, an economy must live indefinitely within nature's limits.... A sustainable economy must be able to provide not only jobs but, ideally, also meaningful work and meaningful lives for those human beings who make up 'the economy' (Hall & Klitgaard 2012: 35)." In this definition the economy must answer to the welfare of the environment and people first.

In similar language, The United Kingdom's Sustainable Development Commission calls for prosperity rather than economic growth. The former is achieved by the strength of relationships, social trust, satisfaction at work, civic engagement, and a sense of shared meaning and purpose as essential to prosperity (Lewis & Conaty 2012: 15). To achieve this, governments must "provide creative opportunities for people to flourish" and "establish clear resource and environmental limits on economic activity" (Lewis & Conaty 2012: 15). Resource and environmental limits would likely reduce reliance on the market for some human needs. Meaningful jobs and meaningful lives (involving a reasonable measure of subsistence work and access to technology), full of meaning and purpose, provide a starting point for a critique of the triangle.

A third way of thinking about non-material needs is in terms of the human spirit, something that makes us distinct from all other species, and thus is part of human nature. According to psychologist Michael Penn and political scientist Aditi Malik there are two elements to the human spirit: "to consciously strive to attain that which is perceived to be true, beautiful and good" and our psychological sense of self with hopes and aspirations "that transcend the struggle for mere existence and continuity as a biological organism" (Penn & Malik 2010: 665-688). The first might roughly be central to a meaningful life and the second to meaningful work. So far we have established some conditions for promoting the human spirit. But what is the relationship between meaningful lives and work and the environment?

Establishing what the relationship between meaningful lives and the environment requires re-evaluating the role of technology. Herman Daly seeks to remind that pursuit of technology should be a means to an end, human well being, not an end in itself. And his ultimate (natural capital) and intermediate means (labor and processed raw materials) are means by which humans express their nature and needs, their “ends.” Daly is missing one important intermediate end, our holistic relationship to the environment, and one ultimate end, the capability for self-sufficiency. In Daly’s scheme humans rely on natural resources for material needs alone. In actuality, we rely on natural resources for a variety of human needs. But experiences of harmony, fulfillment and transcendence (or truth, beauty, and goodness) are grounded in both the social and natural worlds.



From: Daly 1973 in Meadows 1998, <http://www.tosca-life.info/sustainability/definitions>

Ecologist Daniel Botkin argues that the material world does not simply provide capital. Using Thoreau's writings, he illuminates Thoreau's direct observation, scientific study, and openness to new ideas as a formula for outlining what might be humans' relationship with nature. In Botkin's view we relate to nature for material, intellectual, and spiritual reasons (Botkin 2001). Geographer Nigel Clark's insight that we relate to nature as vulnerable beings is important as well. We seek solace in nature, its biodiversity, beauty and grandeur and we, despite our technological prowess, remain subject to it in the form of heavy rains, tornados, lightning, and tectonic activity (Clark 2011). Thus, we relate to nature as a material, intellectual and spiritual resource.

The latter two concerns are minimized in most current formulations of sustainability.⁹ Human lives create meaning beyond labor and beyond control of resources. In fact, part of being human is being vulnerable (spirituality), working directly with natural resources and understanding or seeking to understand them (intellectual). Both inculcate a connection to the natural world (spiritual and intellectual). If prosperity of the human spirit is the goal, labor in a variety of ways, not just for wages but also for aesthetics, health and community welfare, becomes important. Such thinking shifts from policy for productivity alone to policy for meaningful work and meaningful engagement within a larger framework of human society and the environment. It likely entails some form of control or limits on technology as well to create space for human labor, community formation, a sense of vulnerability and transcendence and opportunities for direct observation and study.¹⁰

Conclusion

Due to a confluence of events in the 20th century, Westerners (and many others) finished the century steeped in a deep faith in development, one that did little to promote sustainability. With some distance from our global efforts at eradicating poverty, and promoting development, sustainable or otherwise, we are in a better position than in the past to recognize that little has changed for the better in the global community as a result of 1980s sustainability. To achieve sustainability within the biophysical limits of the planet while maintaining respect for the human spirit and the human need for meaningful work, a more holistic and inclusive understanding of what it means, first, to be human and, then, members of larger societies is in order. Production and consumption are means to an end but not the only mechanism by which society should be measured. In the twenty-first century, concern for both people and planet calls for thinking more deeply and rigorously about the interconnectedness between people and the environment. In so doing, humans and human societies are seen as primarily makers of meaning (goodness, beauty, and truth) in both natural and social realms through a variety of activities, including labor, rather than makers of goods.

A new sustainability paradigm will illustrate consideration of the human spirit and broader human needs by emphasizing human nature. In this view, human nature has a multi-faceted relationship to the environment, both its tangible and intangible resources. Human societies are utterly dependent on the natural world not only for material but also intellectual and spiritual sustenance. Only a holistic view of these relationships will support the flourishing of other species as well as the human species. Such pan-species flourishing is what sustainability seeks.

Kathleen R. Smythe teaches African history, global economic development and sustainability at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio. She is the author of two books and numerous journal articles. Her most recent book is entitled *Africa's Past and Our Future* (projected publishing date Spring 2015) and illuminates ten long-standing ideas and institutions in African history that broaden Western thinking about social, political and economic organization. E-mail: smythe@xavier.edu

Notes

- ¹ Elkington first introduced the triple bottom line of which people, planet and profit are an outgrowth.
- ² The film *Kumekucha* illuminates women's lives in Tanzania during the 1970s during difficult economic times. The subsistence work that women were doing and their relatively new entrance into wage labor alongside men's disenfranchisement from the market economy are clearly visible as legacies of the colonial period.
- ³ Geographer Mark Davison offers one possible definition of a sustainable society as "one where social movements, forms of democracy and the foundations of political action are constantly reworked." This definition promotes social relations organized around politics rather than the market. Beate Littig and Erich Griesler note the possibility of adding "a cultural-aesthetic, a religious-spiritual, or a political-institutional pillar."
- ⁴ A similar approach to sustainable development can be seen in the Kyoto Protocol and Copenhagen Commitment. In both cases, it was recognized that less industrialized countries had a right to develop along lines similar to the more industrialized, carbon-emitting nations, Clark 2011: 112.
- ⁵ The term "sustainable development" was already in use but the UN document popularized it. The 1980 World Conservation Strategy authored by the World Conservation Union (IUCN), the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) used the term. Robinson 1993: 20.
- ⁶ See also p. 46 for the first strategy for achieving sustainable development, "reviving growth."
- ⁷ Anthropologist Jeremy Keenan provides a great example of how one institution, deeply involved in promoting the idea of sustainable development was not able to bring the legs of the triangle together in its own work. He notes that following the UN Rio Conference on Environment and Development, "the World Bank set up a special fund, the Global Environmental Facility to allocate financial assistance to countries that showed their willingness to comply with the new international charter in matters of biodiversity conservation and environmental policies.... As a parallel process, the 1990s saw the World Bank pursuing its own socio-economic agenda of putting 'poverty alleviation' at the top of its priorities." Keenan 2013: 45.

- ⁸ See a variety of documents at www.worldbank.org as well as Rist 2008:190 for NGO approaches to environmental aspects of development. The Conventions on Climate Change and Biodiversity remain active.
- ⁹ Erick Keys notes that Donald Worster is concerned about the anthropocentric nature of sustainable development. He is more comfortable with the opposite approach that nature has intrinsic value, apart from what humans have normally associated with it. Thus, Worster “calls for an ethical and aesthetic relationship with nature.” While the interpretation here is anthropocentric it also recognizes an aesthetic and spiritual relationship to nature that is beyond our control. The proposal here seeks to move beyond the anthropocentric/intrinsic dichotomy to a view of nature and humans’ relationship to it that is grounded in evolutionary biology and long-term history. Keys 1998: 82. Such an approach also assumes some level of biodiversity preservation for maximum human benefit. See Robinson 1993: 21.
- ¹⁰ Erick Keys is quoting Michael Redclift noting that “Societies moving toward sustainability control technology and consumption in order to satisfy basic needs, not to gather maximum profits.” Keys 1998: 81.

References

- Aho, C. Michael & Marc Levinson (1988): “The Economy After Reagan”, *Foreign Affairs*, 67:2, 10-25.
- American Experience: 25 Years PBS:
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/primary-resources/truman-inaugural/>.
(accessed 20 October 2013).
- Bertaux, Nancy E., Kathleen R. Smythe & Elaine Crable (2012): “Transformative Community Service Learning: Beyond the ‘Poor,’ the ‘Rich,’ and the Helping Dynamic”, *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice*, 12:2, 34-45.
- Black, Brian C. (2012): *Crude Reality: Petroleum in World History*, Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Blaustein, Richard (2008): “The Green Revolution Arrives in Africa”, *Bioscience*, 58:1, 8-14.
- Borgmann, Albert (1984): *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life: A Philosophical Inquiry*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Botkin, Daniel (2001): *No Man’s Garden: Thoreau and a New Vision for Civilization and Nature*, Washington D.C.: Island Press.
- Clark, Nigel (2011): *Inhuman Nature: Sociable Life on a Dynamic Planet*, Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Daly, Herman E. (2008): ‘Growth and Development: Critique of a Credo’ *Population and Development Review*, 34:3, 511-518.
- Daly, Herman E. & Joshua Farley (2011): *Ecological Economics: Principles and Applications*, 2nd ed., Washington DC: Island Press.
- Davidson, Mark (2009): “Social Sustainability: A Potential for Politics”, *Local Environment*, 14:7, 607-19.
- Elkington, John (1994): “Towards the Sustainable Corporation: Win-win-win Business Strategies for Sustainable Development”, *California Management Review*, 36:2, 90–100.
- (1997): *Cannibals with Forks: The Triple Bottom Line of the 21st Century Business*, Oxford: Capstone Publishing, 1997.
- Gilbert, Erik & Jonathon Reynolds (2012): *Africa in World History: From Prehistory to the Present*, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson.

- Ferguson, James (2009): "The Uses of Neoliberalism", *Antipode*, 41:S1, 166-184.
- Foster, John Bellamy (2011): "Capitalism and the Accumulation of Catastrophe", *Monthly Review* December, 1-18.
- Hall, Charles & Kent A. Klitgaard (2012): *Energy and the Wealth of Nations: Understanding the Biophysical Economy*, New York: Springer.
- Jacob, Merle (1994): "Toward a Methodological Critique of Sustainable Development", *The Journal of Developing Areas*, 28:2, 237-252.
- Kavanagh, Dennis (1997): *The Reordering of British Politics: Politics after Thatcher*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Keenan, Jeremy (2013): *The Dying Sahara: US Imperialism and Terror in Africa*, London: Pluto Press.
- Kerr, Rachel Benzner (2012): "Lessons From the old Green Revolution for the New: Social, Environmental and Nutritional Issues for Agricultural Change in Africa", *Progress in Development Studies*, 12:2 & 3, 213-229.
- Keys, Erick (1998): "Historical Parellels to Sustainable Development Discourse. A Review Essay", *Revista Geografica*, 124, 79-85.
- Kuttner, Robert (July 17, 1989): "Plane Truth", *The New Republic*, 201, 21-23.
- Littig, Beate & Erich Griesler (2005): "Social Sustainability: A Catchword between Political Pragmatism and Social Theory", *International Journal of Sustainable Development*, 8:1 & 2, 65-79.
- Lyson, Thomas A. (2004): *Civic Agriculture: Reconnecting Farm, Food and Community*, Medford MA: Tufts University Press.
- Lewis, Michael & Pat Conaty (2012): *The Resilience Imperative: Cooperative Transitions to a Steady-State Economy*, Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers.
- Mathabane, Mark (1987): *Kaffir Boy*, New York: McMillan.
- Mazoyer, Marcel & Laurence Roudart (2006): *A History of World Agriculture: From the Neolithic Age to the Current Crisis*, trans. James H. Membrez, New York: Monthly Review Press.
- McGoldrick, Dominic (1996): "Sustainable Development and Human Rights: An Integrated Conception", *The International Comparative Law Quarterly*, 45:4, 796-818.
- McKibben, Bill (2010): *Eaarth: Making Life on a Tough New Planet*, New York: St. Martin's Griffin.
- McMichael, Phillip (2009): *Development and Social Change: A Global Perspective*, Thousand Oaks, California: Pine Forge Press.
- M'Mbugu-Schelling, Flora (1987): *Kumekucha (From Sunup)*, Maryknoll NY: Maryknoll World Films.
- Our Common Future (1987): <http://www.un-documents.net/wced-ocf.htm> (accessed 1 October 2013).
- Penn, Michael L. & Aditi Malik (2010): "The Protection and Development of the Human Spirit: An Expanded Focus for Human Rights Discourse", *Human Rights Quarterly*, 32:3, 665-688.
- Ricketts, Glenn M. (2010): "The Roots of Sustainability", *Academic Questions*, 23:1, 20-53.
- Rist, Gilbert (2008): *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith*, 3rd ed., Trans. by Patrick Camiller, London: Zed Books.
- Robinson, John G. (1993): "The Limits to Caring: Sustainable Living and the Loss of Biodiversity", *Conservation Biology*, 7:1, 20-28.
- Rostow, Walt Whitman (1980): *The Stages of Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sen, Amartya (1999): *Development as Freedom*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Contesting ‘Environment’ Through the Lens of Sustainability: Examining Implications for Environmental Education (EE) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

By Helen Kopnina

Abstract

This article reflects on implications of presenting nature as a social construction, and of commodification of nature. The social construction of nature tends to limit significance of nature to human perception of it. Commodification presents nature in strict instrumental terms as ‘natural resources’, ‘natural capital’ or ‘ecosystem services’. Both construction and commodification exhibit anthropocentric bias in denying intrinsic value of non-human species. This article will highlight the importance of a deep ecology perspective, by elaborating upon the ethical context in which construction and commodification of nature occur. Finally, this article will discuss the implications of this ethical context in relation to environmental education (EE) and education for sustainable development (ESD).

Keywords: Anthropocentrism, biodiversity, conservation, deep ecology, education for sustainable development (ESD), environmental education (EE), ethics, pluralism, sustainability, sustainable development

Introduction

This *Culture Unbound* special issue seeks to address the question: How does sustainability manifest itself when examined from within the broad field of cultural economy? But what is meant by sustainability? There are different terms that describe sustainability: ‘industrial ecology’, ‘business ecology’, ‘Cradle to Cradle’, ‘green capitalism’, ‘eco-efficiency’, ‘social and environmental responsibility’, and the triple bottom line (People, Planet, Profit). The word ‘sustainability’ is an adjective that means the capacity to support, maintain or endure; it can indicate both a goal and a process. In ecology sustainability describes how biological systems remain diverse, robust, and productive over time, a necessary precondition for the well-being of humans and other species. Distinction is drawn between different types of sustainability, for example between social (in terms of sustaining people’s welfare) and environmental (in terms of sustaining nature or natural resources) sustainability as well as combination of them.

Since the 1980s, the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) defines sustainability as integration of environmental, economic, and social dimensions towards responsible management of natural resources. In *Our Common Future* report, The Brundtland Commission (1987) characterized sustainable development as ‘development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’.

The word ‘sustainability’ became so ubiquitous; it can mean almost anything and apply to almost anything. Sustaining plant and animal life or sustaining human lifestyles can be as different (and potentially opposing) as preserving rainforest AND expanding agricultural activities in the same area. The breadth of sustainability as a subject of educational practice is reflected in environmental education (EE) and education for sustainable development (ESD) publications in journals such as *Environmental Education Research*, *Journal of Environmental Education*, *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, and *Journal of Education for Sustainable Development*.

ESD can be regarded as an ‘ethical education’ that embraces universal aspects and concepts as well as variety of ethical positions (Sund & Öhman 2011; Van Poeck & Vandenabeele 2012). As Arjen Wals and Bob Jickling (2002: 223) have reflected, sustainability issues involve addressing ethical questions and issues about cultural identities, social and environmental equity, respect, society-nature relationships and tensions between intrinsic and instrumental values. Environmental ethics are seen as particularly pertinent to clarifying some of the important pedagogical grounds of environmental education (Jickling 2005; Kronlid & Öhman 2013).

While typically attempting to combine both social and environmental objectives, literature on the relationship between education, ethics and sustainable development also reflects upon potential contradictions and paradoxes embedded in sustainability discourse. ‘When comparing the sustaining of ecological processes with the sustaining of consumerism we immediately see inconsistencies and incompatibilities of values, yet many people, conditioned to think that sustainability is inherently good, will promote both at the same time’ (Wals & Jickling 2002: 223). It is questioned whether the objective of balancing social, economic and environmental triad is achievable, since the expansion of the ‘economic pie’ to the ‘bottom billion’ (Collier 2007) of the poor would lead to a greater crisis of natural resources (Bartlett 2012; Rolston 2015). Washington (2013) argues that mainstream sustainability solutions that do not take environmental integrity as a starting point do not address long term solutions and the issues connected with population and consumption.

In line with the objective of this special issue, this article aims to interrogate manifold and disputed features, uses and manifestations of the term sustainability through critical reflection on paradoxes of sustainable development. However, rather than attempting to come to terms sustainable development and deal with its inability to perform as a coherent concept, this article will argue that the mainstream concept of sustainability is largely influenced by the two trends within sustainability discourse in relation to nature.

The first trend is the social construction of nature, in which nature is seen primarily as a culturally and socially mediated concept. The second trend is commodification in which non-human species are presented as ‘natural resources’ or ‘ecosystem services’. While there are other possible or contrastive trends in this discursive field, the author has selected constructivism and commodification because they represent dominant conceptions in sustainability discourse. The following sections will reflect upon the implications of these trends and will highlight the importance of a perspective oriented towards the intrinsic values of nature, and the relevance of such a perspective to EE and ESD.

Constructing ‘Nature’

On the one hand, construction can refer to actual man-made ‘construction’ (creation or building) of environment by humans, as in the case of urban environments or gardens; and to social construction, that is culturally mediated way of perceiving environment. Historically, humans had a significant influence on their environment, thus parts of nature was literally ‘constructed’ into objects and artifacts by humans.

With the emergence of post-modern philosophy, yet another dimension of construction was added. That dimension can be characterized by fusing nature with human perception of it, which blends not only wild places with cultivated gardens,

but even the *thought* about wild places or domesticated species with their originals. This constructivism reflects the diversity of use of the term 'environment' and examines how the very definition of 'sustainability' fits within the broader history, issues and purposes of what sustainability is supposed to do in relation to nature (Crist 2008). Following a long tradition of epistemological doubt in philosophical thought, the very physicality of nature is fused – and in some cases made subordinate to – human perception of it (Rolston 1997).

Postmodern literary tradition has often blurred the lines between what is natural and artificial. This blending implies that 'nature' is connected to and does not exist outside the human perception of it (Escobar 1996). As William Cronon (1996:70) has asserted: 'Wilderness hides its unnaturalness behind a mask that is all the more beguiling because it seems so natural. As we gaze into the mirror it holds up for us, we too easily imagine that what we behold is Nature when in fact we see the reflection of our Own unexamined longings and desires'. Continuing in this tradition, in 'Trouble with Nature: Ecology as the New Opium of the Masses' (2010), Erik Swyngedouw argues that 'nature' is the empty signifier as

the biological world is inherently relationally constituted through contingent, historically produced, infinitely variable forms in which each part, human or non-human, organic or non-organic is intrinsically bound up with the wider relation that make up the whole...a singular Nature does not exist...there is no trans-historical and/or trans-geographical transcendental natural state of things or conditions or of relations, but rather that there are a range of different historical natures, relations and environments that are subject to continuous, occasionally dramatic or catastrophic, and rarely, if ever, fully predictable changes and transformations (303).

Swyngedouw lays out an argument that: 1. 'Nature' and its more recent derivatives, like 'environment' or 'sustainability' are 'empty' signifiers. 2. There is no such thing as a singular Nature around which an environmental policy or an environmentally sensitive planning can be constructed and performed. 3. The obsession with a singular Nature that requires 'sustaining' or, at least 'managing', is sustained by a particular 'quilting' of Nature that forecloses asking political questions about immediately and really possible alternative socio-natural arrangements.

From this perspective, nature is not only represented by language but created by it, and ultimately becomes little more than an offshoot of social reality. What is worst, concern about environment came to be seen by some as an "elite" preoccupation (Rudy and Konefal 2007; West 2008). While dismissive of overwhelming evidence of grass-roots environmental activism and non-Western (thus 'none-elite') ecocentric perspectives (e.g. Black 2010), as well as anthropocentrism inherent in neoliberal view of environment in much of social science (Dunalp and Van Lier 1978; Kopnina 2012d), this view has found its way into literature on conservation, environmental ethics, and educational research.

Construction of Nature in Educational Practice

Construction of nature within EE and ESD is supported by the calls for encouraging plural and open perspectives based on the belief that there are many conceptions of nature and sustainability, and none of them are fixed or objective (e.g. Gough & Scott 2007). This implies that ‘it is a myth to think that there is a single right vision or a best way to sustain the earth’ (Wals & Jickling 2002: 224) and that ‘there are too many realities out there, and, to make things worse, these realities shift and transform constantly’ (Wals 2010: 144). Sustainability claims are seen as socially constructed, contextual and subject to social and political struggle (Van Poeck & Vandenaabeele 2012: 549). As Van Poeck and Vandenaabeele emphasize, ‘researchers point at the widely accepted observation that we do not and cannot know what the most sustainable way of living is’ (2012: 547). This raises the question: ‘if values are culturally contextual and variable – are educators and education policy-makers then left with relativist positions and arguments?’ (Sund & Öhman 2014). The implications of answering this question for educational practice are profound.

Constructivist view implies that students will be (and are) taught that environmental problems are related to public debates. Instrumental aim of educating *for* the environment can be easily dismissed in favor of pluralistic discussions about what environment and sustainability mean to different people. The perceived danger of having an instrumental education *for* sustainability or *for* nature concerns the ‘difficulty of warranting a set of educational values and norms’ (Sund & Öhman 2014) that is inconsistent with democratic tradition of our (Western, ‘enlightened’) society. Without allowing plural perspectives, we are warned, we may even slip into what Wals and Jickling (2002: 225) called ‘eco-totalitarianism’, a ‘regime that through law and order, rewards and punishment, and conditioning of behavior can create a society that is quite sustainable according to some more ecological criteria’. Wals and Jickling continue, ‘we can wonder whether the people living within such an “eco-totalitarian” regime are happy or whether their regime is just, but they do live “sustainably” and so will their children’ (Ibid). Reflecting on the perceived need to support the democratic responsibilities of public education, researchers find an easy ally in constructivist tradition which tends to dismiss the urgency of education *for* anything in favor of caution *against* instrumentalism.

Criticism of Construction

The fear of the normative dangers of education and a conviction that it is ‘wrong to persuade, influence or even educate people towards pre- and expert-determined ways of thinking and acting’ (Wals 2010: 150) is mediated by using construction of nature and sustainability. Yet, as Holmes Rolston III has reflected:

Too much lingering in the Kantian conviction that we humans cannot escape our subjectivity makes us liable to commit a fallacy of misplaced values. We must release some realms of value from our subject-minds and locate these instead out there in the world, at the same time that we are involved enough to feel the bite that registers values, getting past mere science to residence in a biotic community. If we cannot have that much truth, we have not only lost a world, we have become lost ourselves (1997: 62-63).

Constructivist view of nature makes it impossible to judge one attitude toward nature as better or worse, more beneficial or more harmful than any other for, according to this logic, there is no nature outside the human perception of it (Crist 2008; Kopnina 2012c). Therefore the discussion of environmental problems or conservation is only relevant in as far as human perception of what needs to be sustained, implicitly relying on a humanist perspective about knowledge creation that privileges the cognitive sovereignty of human subject over nature (Crist 2008). In this framework, animal victimhood can be perceived as nothing more than a collateral damage (Desmond 2013).

Another issue with environment's representation as a social construction is that the warning voices about environmental calamities can be dismissed as alarmist 'environmental apocalypticism' (Veldman 2012). Constructivism can thus also apply to construction of environmental problems, and to rendering of issues associated with biodiversity threats, climate change, and many others as an interesting case of discussion among environmental ethicists rather than 'real' issues to be addressed. Indeed, one may argue that projecting doom and gloom may spur some otherwise unmotivated consumers into more sustainable behaviors. Yet, it is not just apocalyptic projections that need to be critically examined when addressing social construction of nature. As Crist (2012: 153) reflects in her projection of the future:

In contrast with many of my colleagues, I do not necessarily foresee a world that collapses by undermining its own life-support systems. It may instead turn into a world that is molded and propped by the strengths advanced industrial civilization has at its disposal: the rational-instrumental means of technical management, heightened efficiency, and technological breakthrough. It is possible that by such means a viable 'civilization' might be established upon a thoroughly denatured planet. What is deeply repugnant about such a civilization is not its potential for self-annihilation, but its totalitarian conversion of the natural world into a domain of resources to serve a human supremacist way of life, and the consequent destruction of all the intrinsic wealth of its natural places, beings, and elements.

It is the question of this intrinsic wealth that is being seriously undermined by constructivist thinkers. The danger of constructivism is in forgetting that nature can exist outside of human politics, assumptions and desires, and to channel the questions of stewardship, responsibility, and guilt into an amorphous realm of academic discussions.

Commodifying Nature

Related to constructionism, nature is often framed as a ‘common good’ and putting a price on ‘ecosystem services’ or ‘natural capital’ became increasingly prominent in international political debates since the nineteen eighties. The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB), is an example of a global initiative focused on drawing attention to the economic benefits of biodiversity including the growing cost of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation. Commodification of nature refers to an area of research within critical environmental studies concerned with the ways in which natural entities and processes are made exchangeable through economic valuation. Commodification view of biodiversity is summarized in the World Bank’s mission statement on environment and sustainable development: ‘The World Bank’s mission is to alleviate poverty and support sustainable development. Biological resources provide the raw materials for livelihoods, sustenance, medicines, trade, tourism, and industry...’ (<http://go.worldbank.org/08H25N3QY0>).

In an interview with *The Ecologist* (Lee 2010), Paul Collier has explicitly linked the moral objective of lifting poverty with the idea of nature as a commodity, pointing out that its preservation is only important in so far as it serves economic interests of the poor. In discussing ethical implications of preserving or destroying nature, Collier argues that the only ethical responsibility and only rights lie between present human communities and future generations of humans:

If you take a rights-based view, we don't have the right to plunder our natural assets and not leave anything to the future or plunder our natural liabilities and leave a huge load for the future. The question is: what is the nature of these rights? This depends upon how much value is created when we burn down nature.

Sometimes, in poor societies, it is very important to burn down nature and convert it into more productive assets and hand these on. This is the ethical imperative – that's what stewardship is. Using natural assets productively, creating more value and passing them on is how we will reduce poverty.

But in other cases, the same thought experiment will come up with a different answer – the future may say you are proposing to leave us a nasty climate and we will be awash in man-made assets...Once you come from a doctrinal, ideological position that ‘nature has to be preserved’, it will condemn poor societies to poverty (Collier in Lee 2010).

Collier criticizes ‘romantic environmentalists’ who argue that nature should also have rights – instead he argues that ‘simple ethics of nature – different from the conventional economic ethics of the future and also different from the romantic environmentalist position’ relates to human rights to exploit nature.

Commodification of Nature in Educational Practice

Referring to the objectification of non-human species into ‘resources’ Crist (2012: 150) notes that the ‘genocide of nonhumans is something about which the main-

stream culture, observes silence'. Academics, including educational practitioners, seem to follow suit, perhaps because they view raising an issue about which silence is observed as a non sequitur. Relating this back to EE and ESD, combating social problems are acknowledged in all ESD objectives, speciesism is considered to be a non-issue as overview of ESD indicators suggest (Reid et al. 2006; UNESCO 2013a). The recent review of articles in leading EE and ESD journals have revealed that there is little mention of ecological justice, or discussion of the rights of non-human species (Kopnina 2012a, 2013a). In the widely accepted anthropocentric curriculum, conceiving controlling the growth of human population and limiting consumption becomes inconceivable, while distribution of natural resources – aka species of plants and animals either directly used for consumption or swiped away during clearing of 'productive lands' become normalized. EE explicitly addressing consumption in Western countries or global population growth are rare (e.g. Kopnina 2013b).

The key areas outlined in the documents of the Decade for Education for sustainable Development (2005-2014) are mostly social or economic, such as cultural diversity, poverty reduction, gender equality, health promotion, peace and human security (UNESCO 2013a). The 'environmental' areas such as water, climate change or biodiversity are explicitly linked to human concerns. Limits to growth, and population growth seem to be subordinate to the aim of reconciling protection of biodiversity with 'growth of human activities' (UNESCO 2013b).

In relation to education, this suspicion has crossed over into doubt whether the shifting focus towards social equity issues in EE and ESD may represent abandoning of concerns with preservation of nature in favor of more conventional 'sustainability' solutions geared toward further commodification and construction of nature. Critical authors have emphasized that the current contradictory discourses on sustainability have implications for how the education is carried out, particularly pointing out robust anthropocentric bias in teaching students both to perceive (construct) and use (commodify) nature as subordinate to human interests (e.g. Jickling 2005; Kopnina 2012a).

Criticism of Commodification

Collier's insistence that the only moral obligation in regard to nature is the equitable distribution of its assets to the poor is a prevalent position in mainstream sustainable development discourse, and indeed in many neo-liberal societies. This position however can be criticized from a number of perspectives.

The first objection has to do with ethics. Arne Naess (1973, 1989) is credited with coining the term 'deep ecology' and distinguishing it from 'shallow ecology'. Shallow ecology can be exemplified by environmental concerns motivated by anthropocentric interests, such as the fight against pollution and resource depletion, which is typically associated with sustainable development. Shallow ecology

adheres to the Dominant Social Paradigm (DSP), positing endless progress, growth, and abundance as pre-conditions of human development (Dunlap & Van Liere 1978). Those committed to shallow ecology solutions are treating only the symptoms, and not the source of the symptoms, such as overpopulation and growth in consumption. DSP is opposed to the New Ecological Paradigm (NEP), which highlights the disruption of ecosystems caused by modern industrial societies exceeding environmental limits.

Deep ecology can be summarized in a number of tenants (although many consequent philosophers and ethicists have interpreted them differently). First, the well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth have value in themselves, and thus possess intrinsic value, independent of the usefulness to humans (Miller et al 2014). Pricing of nature is a problem as many species, landscapes and services are unique or otherwise irreplaceable. Secondly, richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values. The ideological change proposed is appreciating life quality dwelling in situations of inherent value, rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living (Naess 1989: 29). Deep ecology perspective suggests that humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs (Naess 1973). In the very act of commodifying nature, moral consideration is exclusively reserved to human beings, judging our acts towards nature on the basis of how they affect our social or economic interests (Eckersley 2004).

Comparing deep ecology perspective to that of social liberation movement of the past, prominent anthropologist Veronica Strang (2013) notes that in the last few centuries, large patriarchal societies have embarked upon hegemonic colonial enterprises creating wildly unequal power relations between human societies and that concern with social justice has therefore tended to be concerned with the rights of disadvantaged human groups. However, it is often entangled with notions of 'development' and achieving more equitable access to resources.

What sometimes gets lost in the shuffle is that this process of expansion has also exported to all corners of the globe unsustainable economic practices. While these may support human groups, they have had massive impacts on non-human species and ecosystems....However; there remains a thorny question as to whether anyone, advantaged or disadvantaged, has the right to prioritise their own interests to the extent that those of the non-human are deemed expendable (Strang 2013: 2).

Another objection to commodification is the practical (anthropocentric) concern whether – even from an anthropocentric perspective of practical utility – humans (both rich and poor) will profit from depletion of natural resources, and whether human equity questions will be solved by short-term increase and distribution of wealth. Blowfield (2013) suggests that it does not appear logical to include poverty in sustainability challenges, as population growth and heightened

consumption actually deepen sustainability challenges such as water, food and energy.

Strang (2013) argues that discourses on justice for people often imply that the most disadvantaged groups should have special rights to redress long-term imbalances. However, if the result is only a short-term gain at the long-term expense of the non-human, this is in itself not a sustainable process for maintaining either social or environmental equity. Crist (2012) argues that destruction of natural resources presents a greater loss for humanity itself that is *not* resources but the very essence of what makes humans native to the Earth, the magical potency of true inter-connectiveness with other species.

Another question that arises from economic valuation of nature is whether commodification is sufficient to support only those elements of nature most useful to human endeavor, while potentially ignoring anything that might not have manifest value to humans. Some authors have suggested that preservation of ‘some’ biodiversity would be sufficient and that we should not be so concerned about species that are functionally useless to humanity. Haring (2011) argues that only some select species such as agricultural monocultures are needed for human welfare, one should accept the ‘uncomfortable truth about biodiversity’, the fact that not all species are needed (and should be protected) by humanity (Thompson 2010).

Aside from those who espouse deep ecology perspective or represent animal rights, the mainstream sustainability supporters do not seem to consider ecological justice or justice between species, to be part of sustainable development (Baxter 2005). The ethical burden of sacrificing *billions* of non-human species to feed an (growing) segment of human population reveals one of the most striking ethical paradoxes of sustainability.

Cultural economy suggests that markets are sites where actors grapple with questions of valuation and the consummation of an economic exchange involving efforts to qualify the object that is exchanged and hence assessing its value in certain dimensions (Helgesson & Kjellberg 2013: 361). Ecological justice concerns go beyond mere questions of cultural economy.

Reflection

EE/ESD scholars are right to point out the danger of accepting pre-determined, official, mainstream views of sustainability, as most of them are geared toward oxymoronic aims of combining ‘the triple P’ objectives, the empty slogans and hidden agendas of financial institutions and development agencies (e.g. Jickling 2005; Stevenson 2006; Jickling & Wals 2008). Yet, there are a few issues that need to be emphasized in relation to the fear of ‘environmental indoctrination’.

We shall recall the fear of eco-totalitarian society (Wals & Jickling 2002). On the emancipatory end of the continuum Jickling and Wals support a ‘very transparent society’, with ‘action competent citizens’, who

actively and critically participate in problem solving and decision making, and value and respect alternative ways of thinking, valuing and doing. This society may not be so sustainable from the strictly ecological point of view as represented by the eco-totalitarian society, but the people might be happier, and ultimately capable of better responding to emerging environmental issues (2002: 225).

One issue with the horror scenario of ‘eco-totalitarian’ education is empirical – whether EE/ESD scholars really believe that education that teaches students to care about nature can lead to such a frightening unhappy society? There is no literature, to my knowledge, correlating ‘happiness’ (or ‘unhappiness’, for that matter) to better responses to environmental issues.¹ Empirical evidence shows that despite any efforts in education or society, environmental problems such as extinction of species continue unabated and there is not a thread of evidence that any radical environmentalist groups are anywhere close to overtaking educational institutions, let alone the public minds (Kopnina 2012b).

Another issue with the ‘eco-totalitarian’ scenario is ethical – is preaching *for* democratic values, equality of genders, races, etc. and *against* ecologically benign governance not a form of indoctrination itself? Following the relativist position, we imagine that it can very well be, and this indoctrination might be much worse than some imaginary ‘eco-totalitarianism’ as it is tacit, hidden, and universally accepted (at least in politically correct, enlightened, Western educational institutions). And is the rhetoric of pluralism, diversity, democracy, etc. not too comfortably close to the discursive preferences of the leading international organizations that ‘inspire’ and most significantly fund the EE/ESD enterprise? Indeed, ‘learning from sustainable development’ seems to gear our educational practice towards articulation rather than resolution of conflicts, avoiding moral (good vs. bad) or rational (right vs. wrong) terms at all costs (Van Poeck & Vandenabeele 2012: 548). What happens then to our ‘deep concern about the state of the planet and a sense of urgency that demands a break with existing un-sustainable systems’ (Wals 2010: 150)? Are we back to Collier’s ‘simple ethics of nature’?

Rather than delving into the intricate depths of environmental ethics debates within EE/ESD, we can simply demand to know how ‘happy’, to use Wals and Jickling’s (2002) expression, can non-human species be when the very act of their ‘distribution’ becomes part of the economic ethics perspective, and their (majority, in a planetary sense) ‘voice’ is completely excluded from the ‘pluralistic’ perspectives? Of course the academics can retreat back into the relativist distance saying that we cannot know whether non-humans are happy or interpret their ‘voice’. But was this not once the argument used for silencing the slaves or underprivileged human groups or denigrating the ‘savages’? How ‘happy’ can we be

ourselves, living in a polluted world stripped of its bicultural diversity, of variety of life that we ourselves are a part?

Certainly, any totalitarian society sounds frightening. Certainly it is good to have alternative visions, especially when the experts lack insight into the complex web of causes and effects and it is 'not clear who will suffer from the consequences' (Van Poeck & Vandenabeele 2012: 547). Unfortunately in this situation it is actually quite clear who suffers the consequences. Only perhaps our own politically correct EE/ESD community may not want to acknowledge the danger of having a democratic society which conveniently condones extermination of other species as one of many (socially constructed) challenges of sustainability. As not-so-politically correct Crist (2013: 137-138) has retorted in her challenge to the Anthropocene, describing human-driven extinction with detachment (and often in passing) sidesteps a matter of unparalleled, even cosmological significance, while also marshalling those facts as favoring the championed geological designator:

Detached reporting on the sixth extinction amounts to absence of clarity about its earth-shattering meaning and avoidance of voicing the imperative of its preemption. This begs some questions. Will the human enterprise's legacy to the planet, and all generations to come, be to obliterate a large fraction of our nonhuman cohort, while at the same time constricting and enslaving another sizable portion of what is left? ... And in a world where the idea of freedom enjoys superlative status, why are we not pursuing larger possibilities of freedom for people and nonhumans alike, beyond those of liberal politics, trade agreements, technological innovations, and consumer choices? (Ibid)

Is it not in itself indoctrination to claim that we need to favor democracy and economic equality at all costs and that teaching the love of nature is similar to Orwell's Big Brother's totalitarianism? Can education for deep ecology which fosters 'ever deepening understanding of the patterns of the place which produce the life there, an ever deepening gratitude to the mountains, trees, rivers and thus a deeper love' (LaChapelle 1991) really be seen as a threat? And if it can, perhaps we should recall the fear of disturbing our established power hegemonies that used to deny rights of disadvantaged groups less than a hundred years ago. In other words, criticizing instrumentalism in education *for* nature, and promoting a slogan-like idea of diversity and pluralism, are we not ourselves guilty of supporting the impotent cacophony of increasingly anthropocentric voices and academic 'doublethink' (Wals & Jickling 2002)? Are the scholars criticizing 'elite' preoccupation with environmental protection not themselves affected by 'elite' (in this case, anthropocentric, neoliberal) thinking that allows them to abandon nature as a marginal concern? As Zaleha (2014) has reflected, many scholars supporting construction of nature perspective or explicitly favor social and economic concerns at the expense of non-humans genuinely lack the biophilia. If that is their affective orientation, anthropocentric scholars can indeed imagine they are maintaining a challenge against elites, and in favor of their intended marginal communities. Yet, love of the non-human biophysical world is not the exclusive domain

of neoliberal elites that are the traditional target of postmodernist critique. In fact, without realizing our connection with nature, can we truly teach students to care about ‘our common future’? Can we presume to teach sustainability when we continue to assume the primacy of economic agendas?

We shall recall the question of whether values can be seen as normative or are culturally contextual and variable and what kind of implications this has for educators and education policy-makers (Sund & Öhman 2014)? We can reason in two principle ways. One, we may assume that assessment of value of nature is neither objective nor ethics-free, and in fact highly contextual and ‘morally loaded’ in association with predominant ideology and issues of political correctness. For example, the value of productive labour of slaves, and indeed of slavery itself can hardly be judged – from the point of view of present-day morality – as something that is simply economically rational or part of cultural economy. Yet it has been seen just as such less than a hundred years ago. In this relativistic case, we can assume that our contemporary (Western, enlightened) ideology of embracing democracy, equality, respect for all persons, sacredness of all *human* life, etc. is a mere product of our time and geographical positioning. In this case, there is hope that sacredness of *all* life on earth will one day be recognized, and current way of *using* nature will be seen as morally inconceivable. We might as well attempt teaching this new morality, acknowledging that what we currently teach (respect for other human beings, importance of ‘global citizenship’, ethical imperative of lifting people out of poverty and curing diseases or whatever) is just as transient.

If, on the other hand, and following Kantian non-consequentialism, moral values such as sacredness of human life, are to be seen as absolute good (and indeed, something that we humans, have morally ‘developed’ toward), then recognition of sacredness of *all* life can be seen as the next step of moral development. EE and ESD educators then need to gather courage to teach ecological justice and deep ecology against the grain of dominant anthropocentric hegemonies, insisting that non-human voices, represented through eco-advocates, have to be included into ‘pluralistic’ discourse and supported by continuous affirmative action as they will never be able to speak for themselves. This is no mundane task and certainly requires going beyond the current EE/ESD debates. The scope of this article does not allow us to investigate the ethical background of these claims in any detail. Yet the main thrust of the argument is that we need to critically evaluate our relationship with nature in ethical terms and urgently address its implications in educational practice.

Michael Bonnett’s call to use ESD not for conventional purpose of indoctrination of students into economically significant ‘values’ but for developing a sense of intrinsic value of nature embodies both the critique of commodification and construction of nature:

In its essential otherness nature participates with us in the production (rather than ‘construction’, which is too deliberative) of places that constitute our life-worlds.

Such places are the source of meaning, intrinsic value and identity, and where nature's voice is absent or silenced, that otherness and mystery that can take us beyond ourselves and gift inspiration is removed, leaving the field clear for the unrestrained play of anthropocentrism and the metaphysics of mastery (Bonnett 2013: 19).

This formulation offers us a hopeful direction as to how nature could be alternatively perceived – and taught – in EE and ESD. As Kronlid and Öhman (2013:31) support the view that environmental ethics has an important role to play in sustainability and EE research and that there is great potential in widening this research in terms of methodology and empirical material. 'Schooling the world' that reproduces mainstream power hegemonies may indeed indoctrinate students into the consumerist system of values (Shiva 1993; Black 2010), yet 'learning in nature' and 'learning from nature' can give the students- and future generations of humans and non-humans alike their world back.

Conclusions

In this article we have emphasized two trends within sustainability discourse in relation to nature. This article has contributed to the emergent theme within the field of environmental education (EE) and education for sustainable development (ESD), namely the ethical implications of a trend to treat nature either as social construction or a commodity. The first trend presents nature as primarily as a culturally and socially mediated concept. The second trend, presents non-human species as 'natural resources'. We have emphasized that while the social construction tends to limit significance of nature to human perception of it, commodification tends to present nature in strict instrumental terms. Both trends exhibit anthropocentric bias that is reflected in pluralistic approaches to EE and ESD. It was suggested that while debates on the aims of sustainable development are not new, earnest recognition of the value of conservation or deep ecology education with its emphasis on ecological values, and ethical responsibility of humans towards other planetary citizens, may lead to true integration of human interests with those of the entire ecosphere.

Rather than attempting to come to terms with the multiplicity of conceptions of sustainability and its inability to perform as a coherent concept, the author has argued that the current calls for emancipatory, plural, and democratic education fail to address the deep ecology perspective. As long as pluralistic interpretations of sustainability and environment remain essentially anthropocentric, they cannot address severe and urgent challenges such as rapid extinction of non-human species. Unless education *for* nature is re-instated, no progress in sustaining Nature (either *for* humans or independently of humans) can be expected.

Of course, responding to this call brings us to quite uncomfortable ethical questions that effect more than just cultural economy and contested uses of the term sustainability. As was the case in the past with abolition of slavery, and the rise in

women's and other minority rights' movements – the claim made in this article that sustainability *needs* to include ecological justice is not 'academic'. Yet, the author hopes that this claim will open up a broader discussion about what our children are missing from their current curriculum in order to make them responsible and happy citizens of this planet.

Dr. Kopnina, Helen (Ph.D. Cambridge University, 2002) is currently employed at The Hague University of Applied Science in The Netherlands. She is a coordinator and lecturer of Sustainable Business program, and a researcher in the fields of environmental education and environmental social sciences. Kopnina is the author of over thirty peer reviewed articles and (co)author and (co)editor of nine books, including *East to West Migration* (Ashgate 2005); *Crossing European Boundaries* (Berghahn 2006); *Environmental Anthropology Today* (Routledge 2011); *Anthropology of Environmental Education* (Nova 2012); *Environmental Anthropology: Future Directions* (Routledge 2013); and forthcoming *Sustainable Business: Key Issues* (Routledge 2014); *Sustainability: Key Issues* (Routledge 2015); *Major Works in Environmental Anthropology*; and *Handbook of Environmental Anthropology*. E-mail: h.kopnina@hhs.nl; alenka1973@yahoo.com

Notes

- ¹ There is a huge literature however on the criticism of ecological modernization theory, Environmental Kuznets Curve, and post-material values theories that bring into question the linear relationship between wealthy neo-liberal societies and environmentally benign actions that is regrettably beyond the scope of this article.

Reference

- Bartlett, Albert (2012): 'Reflections on Sustainability and Population Growth', Philip Cafaro and Eileen Crist (eds), *Life on the Brink: Environmentalists confront Overpopulation*. Atlanta: University of Georgia Press, 29-40.
- Baxter, Brian (2005): *A Theory of Ecological Justice*, New York: Routledge.
- Black, Carol (2010): *Schooling the World: The White Man's Last Burden*. Documentary film. Lost People Films: <http://schoolingtheworld.org/> (accessed 11 September 2014).
- Blowfield, Michael (2013): *Business and Sustainability*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bonnett, Michael (2013): 'Sustainable development, environmental education, and the significance of being in place', *Curriculum Journal*. 24(2): 250-271.
- Brundtland, Gro H. (1987): *Our Common Future*, World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Collier, Paul (2007): *The Bottom Billion*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Crist, Eileen (2008): 'Against the social construction of nature and wilderness.' *The Wilderness Debate Rages On*, Volume II, Michael Nelson and J. Baird Callicott (eds), University of Georgia Press.

- (2012): 'Abundant Earth and Population', Philip Cafaro & Eileen Crist (eds): *Life on the Brink: Environmentalists confront Overpopulation*, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 141-153.
- (2013): 'On the Poverty of Our Nomenclature'. *Environmental Humanities*, 3, 129-147.
- Cronon, William (1996): 'The trouble with wilderness, or getting back to the wrong nature,' William Cronon (ed.): *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking Human Place in Nature*, New York, NY: W. W. Norton and Co. 69-90.
- Desmond, Jane (2013): 'Requiem for Roadkill: Death and Denial on America's Roads', Helen Kopnina & Eleanor Shoreman-Ouimet (eds): *Environmental Anthropology: Future Directions*, New York and Oxford: Routledge. 46-58.
- Dunlap, Riley E. & Kent D. Van Liere (1978): 'The New Environmental Paradigm: A Proposed Measuring Instrument and preliminary results'. *The Journal of Environmental Education*, 9:4, 10-19.
- Eckersley, Robyn (2004): *The Green State: Rethinking Democracy and Sovereignty*, London, MIT Press.
- Escobar, Arturo (1996): 'Constructing Nature: Elements for a Poststructural Political Ecology', Richard Peet & Michael Watts (eds): *Liberation Ecologies: Environment, Development, Social Movements*, London: Routledge, 46-68.
- Gough, Stephen R. and Scott, William (2007): *Higher Education and Sustainable Development: Paradox and Possibility*, Abingdon, Routledge.
- Haring, Bas (2011): *Plastic Pandas*, The Netherlands: Nijgh & Van Ditmar.
- Helgesson, Claes-Fredrik & Hans Kjellberg (2013): 'Introduction: Values and Valuations in Market Practice', *Journal of Cultural Economy*, 6:4, 361-369.
- Jickling, Bob (2005): 'Sustainable Development in a Globalizing World: a few cautions'. *Policy Futures in Education*, 3:3, 251-259.
- Jickling, Bob & Arjen E. J. Wals (2008): 'Globalization and Environmental Education: Looking Beyond Sustainable Development', *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 40:1, 1-21.
- Kopnina, Helen (2012a): 'Education for Sustainable Development (ESD): The Turn Away from 'Environment' in Environmental Education?' *Environmental Education Research*, 18:5, 699-717.
- (2012b): 'The Lorax Complex: Deep ecology, Ecocentrism and Exclusion'. *Journal of Integrative Environmental Sciences*, 9:4, 235-254.
- (2012c): 'Towards Conservational Anthropology: Addressing anthropocentric bias in anthropology'. *Dialectical Anthropology*, 36:1, 127-146.
- (2012d): 'Towards Conservational Anthropology: Addressing Anthropocentric Bias in Anthropology'. *Dialectical Anthropology*, 36:1, 127-146.
- (2013a): 'Evaluating Education for Sustainable Development (ESD): Using Ecocentric and Anthropocentric Attitudes toward the Sustainable Development (EAATSD) scale'. *Environment, Development and Sustainability* 15:3, 607-623.
- (2013b): 'An Exploratory Case Study of Dutch Children's Attitudes towards Consumption: Implications for Environmental Education', *The Journal of Environmental Education*, 44:2, 128-144.
- Kronlid, David O. & Johan Öhman (2013): 'An Environmental Ethical Conceptual Framework for Research on Sustainability and Environmental Education', *Environmental Education Research*, 19:1, 21-44.
- LaChapelle, Dolores (1991): 'Educating for Deep Ecology', *Journal of Experiential Education*, 14:3, 18-22.
- Lee, Matilda (2010): Paul Collier: Saying 'Nature has to be Preserved' Condemns the Poor to Poverty: http://www.theecologist.org/Interviews/484203/paul_collier_saying_nature_has_to_be_preserved_condemns_the_poor_to_poverty.html (accessed 11 September 2014).
- Miller, Brian, Micheal E. Soule & John Terborgh (2014): 'New Conservation' or Surrender to Development?', *Animal Conservation*, doi: [10.1111/acv.12129](https://doi.org/10.1111/acv.12129) (accessed 11 September 2014).
- Naess, Arno (1973): 'The Shallow and the Deep: Long-range Ecology Movement. A summary', *Inquiry*, 16:95-99.

- (1989): *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, Cambridge: University Press.
- Reid, Alan, Nikel, Jutta & William Scott (2006): *Indicators for Education for Sustainable Development: a report on perspectives, challenges and progress*. Anglo-German Foundation for the Study of Industrial Society: <http://www.agf.org.uk/> (accessed 11 September 2014).
- Rolston, Holmes III. (1997): 'Nature For Real: Is Nature a Social Construct?', T. D. J. Chappell (ed.): *The Philosophy of the Environment*, Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 38-64.
- (2015): 'Environmental Ethics for Tomorrow: Sustaining the Biosphere', Helen Kopnina & Eleanor Shoreman-Ouimet (eds): *Sustainability: Key issues*, New York: Routledge Earthscan.
- Rudy, Alan P. & Jason Konefal (2007): 'Nature, Sociology, and Social Justice: Environmental Sociology, Pedagogy, and the Curriculum', *American Behavioral Scientist*, 51:4, 495-515.
- Shiva, Vandana (1993): *Monocultures of the Mind: Biodiversity, Biotechnology and Agriculture*, Zed Press, New Delhi.
- Stevenson, Robert (2006): 'Tensions and Transitions in Policy Discourse: Recontextualising a Decontextualised EE/ESD debate'. *Environmental Education Research*, 12:3-4, 277-290.
- Strang, Veronica (2013): Notes for Plenary Debate – ASA-IUAES conference, Manchester, 5-10TH August 2013. Motion: 'Justice for People Must come before Justice for the Environment'.
- Sund, Louise & Johan Öhman (2011): 'Cosmopolitan Perspectives on Education and Sustainable Development – Between Universal Ideals and Particular Values', *Utbildning Och Demokrati [Education and Democracy]* 20:1, 13–34.
- Sund, Louise & Johan Öhman (2014): 'On the Need to Repoliticise Environmental and Sustainability Education: Rethinking the Postpolitical Consensus'. Forthcoming DOI: 10.1080/13504622.2013.833585.
- Swyngedouw, Erik (2010): 'Trouble with Nature: Ecology as the New Opium of the Masses', Jean Hillier & Patsy Healy (eds): *Ashgate Research Companion to Planning Theory: Conceptual Challenges for Spatial Planning*, Farnham: Ashgate.
- Thompson, Kenneth (2010): *Do We Need Pandas? The Uncomfortable Truth about Biodiversity*. Foxhole : Green Books.
- UNESCO (2013a): Education for Sustainable Development (ESD): <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-sustainable-development/> (accessed 11 September 2014).
- UNESCO (2013b): ESD and Biodiversity at UNESCO <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-sustainable-development/biodiversity/> (accessed 11 September 2014).
- Veldman, Robin G. (2012): 'Narrating the Environmental Apocalypse: How Imagining the End Facilitates Moral Reasoning among Environmental Activists', *Ethics & the Environment*, 17: 1, 1-23.
- Wals, Arjen E. J. (2010): 'Between Knowing what is Right and Knowing that is it Wrong to Tell Others what is Right: On Relativism, Uncertainty and Democracy in Environmental and Sustainability Education', *Environmental Education Research*, 16:1, 143-151.
- Wals, Arjen E. J. & Bob Jickling (2002): 'Sustainability' in Higher Education: From Doublethink and Newspeak to Critical Thinking and Meaningful Learning'. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, 3:3, 221-232.
- West, Paige (2008): 'Translation, Value, and Space: Theorizing an Ethnographic and Engaged Environmental'. *American Anthropologist*, 4, 632-642.
- Van Poeck, Katrien & Joke Vandenabeele (2012): 'Learning from Sustainable Development: Education in the Light of Public Issues', *Environmental Education Research*, 18:4, 541-552.
- Washington, Haydn G. (2013): *Human Dependence on Nature*, New York. Routledge: Earthscan.
- Zaleha, Bernard H. (2014): 'Field Statement on Environmental Sociology and Political Ecology: A Weberian Ideal Type analysis through the lens of environmental ethics and social psychology'. Accessed on <https://ucsc.academia.edu/BernardZaleha> (accessed 01 January 2014).

Work at the Periphery: Issues of Tourism Sustainability in Jamaica

By Lauren C. Johnson

Abstract

The tourism industry in Jamaica, as elsewhere in the Caribbean, has provided government interests and tourism stakeholders with increasingly profitable economic benefits. The development and prosperity of the ‘all-inclusive’ vacation model has become a significant aspect of these benefits. Vacationers from North America and Europe are particularly attracted to tourism destinations providing resort accommodations that cater to foreign visitors, offering ‘safe spaces’ for the enjoyment of sun, sand, and sea that so many leisure-seekers desire. Safety and security are progressively becoming more relevant within the contexts of poverty, crime, and tourist harassment that are now commonplace in many of these island destinations. This model of tourism development, however, represents a problematic relationship between these types of hotels and the environmental, political, and economic interests of the communities in which they are located. The lack of linkage between tourist entities and other sectors, such as agriculture and transportation, leaves members of local communities out of the immense profits that are generated. Based on a review of relevant literature and ethnographic research conducted in one of Jamaica’s most popular resort towns, this paper considers the ways in which the sociocultural landscape of a specific place is affected by and responds to the demands of an overtly demanding industry. Utilizing an anthropological approach, I explore local responses to tourism shifts, and analyse recent trends in the tourism industry as they relate to the concept of sustainability.

Keywords: Tourism, culture, ethnography, sustainability, Jamaica

Introduction

While walking along the beach in Negril from where I resided, I cut through a number of all-inclusive hotel properties, the beaches of which were filled with both tourists and security guards. I began to wonder about the significant number of guards and their intended aims on the property. Were they there solely to keep out intruders? As I left one popular resort on a walk, I was immediately approached by several local residents. One man asked if I needed company on my walk, another offered to sell me marijuana, and two women invited me to peruse the crafts they were selling out of a small shed. After turning down their offers, I sat nearby for a while to observe their interactions with tourist passersby. Although these vendors waited for each individual or couple to offer their goods, none of the tourists responded favourably. After that experience, I wrote in my field notes: *These people occupy a space at the periphery of the all-inclusives. The space between resorts, on the beach, where they spend their days waiting for brief opportunities to get in on the immense profitability of tourism here in Negril. They don't have jobs as guards, entertainment staff, housekeepers, bartenders or servers that would allow them to legally occupy spaces within the lines. So they wait outside the lines. They're not young or fit or particularly clever or charismatic. They simply work hard and want to get their piece of the pie.*

This field note excerpt from my first month of research in Jamaica indicates a theme that would become a common aspect of my observations in the place: that of local residents living and working in the periphery of spaces designated for tourists. In order to carry out ethnographic dissertation research on sex tourism in 2010-2011, I conducted observations and interviews with local and foreign-born residents, tourism workers, and health officials on the impact of this particular type of tourism. One noteworthy finding early on during this fieldwork was that a key concern in the resort town is the perceived 'takeover' of the industry by all-inclusive resorts. Shifts in the tourism industry have meant growing profits from tourist visitors to Jamaica, yet have not led to substantial growth for many residents within the country's tourism sectors. Not just a preoccupation of taxi drivers and vendors, this proved to be a concern for hotel owners and managers, restaurateurs, shop owners, and other indirect tourism employees. Feeling the impact of national debt, declining local industry, unemployment, crime, and political strife, Jamaica's people rely on the tourism industry to provide jobs and foreign revenue (de Albuquerque 1999; Alleyne & Boxill 2003; Crick 2003; Boxill 2004; Pattullo 2005). However, the resulting leakage of tourist dollars, environmental pollution, sex tourism, and additional social ills make it clear that tourism cannot be viewed as a fix-all for the nation's problems. The locals residing in resort areas are particularly vulnerable to shifts in the tourism industry and impacted significantly by the issues of tourism-related crime, drug use, and sex work (Dunn & Dunn 2002; Kempadoo 2004; Pattullo 2005). For residents here, as in other tourism destina-

tions, the problem of sustainability is one that must be contended with every day; the delicate balance of appealing to tourists and maintaining the illusion of ‘paradise’ conflicts directly with the struggle to survive (Turner & Ash 1976; Jayawardena 2003; Gmelch 2003; McDavid & Ramajeessingh 2003; Cabezas 2008). Utilizing ethnographic data from the aforementioned research and published research relating to the Caribbean tourism industry, this discussion focuses on the lived experiences of local residents as they pertain to tourism trends and the sustainability of the industry in the region. Here, I seek to contribute to the ongoing discussion of sustainable tourism by emphasizing the significance of the sociocultural impact of tourism on residents, and the need to prioritize local communities in tourism development.

Tourism and the Jamaican Economy

Tourism receipts worldwide totalled approximately \$1,159 billion in 2013; of this amount, \$24.8 billion was generated in the Caribbean region (World Tourism Organization 2014). Last year, Jamaica received the third highest number of stop-over tourists in the Caribbean, following Cuba and the Dominican Republic, with 2,008,409 total visitors (Caribbean Tourism Organization 2014). Tourism receipts overall in Jamaica have increased over the last decade, with tourism contributing \$1.1 billion, or 25.6% in direct and indirect contributions, to the Gross Domestic Product. Travel and tourism directly supported 82,000 jobs in 2013, or 7.0% of total employment, and indirectly supported 274,500 jobs, or 23.4% of total employment (World Travel & Tourism Council 2012). The increasing importance of all-inclusive resorts, however, has left smaller hotel units vulnerable to declining occupancy rates. All-inclusive hotel stays have remained on the rise for the last several years, with the number of room nights sold increasing by nearly one million between 2006 and 2010. For those same years, there was a steady decline for non all-inclusive hotels (Jamaica Tourist Board 2011). Recently, there has been significant hotel expansion in the most popular resort destinations of Ocho Rios, Montego Bay, and Negril, resulting from the foreign direct investment of large Spanish hotel chains (Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit 2011).

The Jamaican economy has become progressively more reliant on both tourism and remittances for its gross domestic product (GDP), yet remains blighted with consistently high unemployment rates and considerable national debt. The unemployment rate is approximately 14%, with the highest numbers of unemployed citizens falling within the 25-34 age group for both men and women (Statistical Institute of Jamaica 2012). The debt-to-GDP ratio is a crucial concern when considering the economic climate in Jamaica, as it is one of the most indebted countries in the world. The country has maintained a debt-to-GDP ratio of approximately 120%, and its interest burden has averaged 13% since 2006 (Weisbrot 2011). This debt and the interest payments it has incurred have led to reductions

in government spending on infrastructure, health care, and education in the country over the last decade (Johnston & Montecino 2011; Weisbrot 2011). Crime has had a negative impact on the Jamaican economy, including detrimental effects on tourism to the country and the amount of spending to control violent crimes. Jamaica currently has a murder rate of 39.3 per 100,000 inhabitants, the majority of which involve firearms. This is the highest rate in the Caribbean and ranks among the highest six murder rates in the world (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2014). Violent crime in Jamaica has been found to be a deterrent to tourists, particularly those from Europe, although the development of all-inclusive resorts as tourist 'enclaves' has mitigated this impact to an extent (de Albuquerque 1999; Alleyne & Boxill 2003; Issa & Jayawardena 2003).

The topic of sustainability in tourism and its relationship to development is one that frequently explores the environmental impact of the industry (Hunter 1997; McKercher 1993; Cohen 2002). The aspects of sustainability that are of relevance to this discussion, however, are those that seek to determine the ways in which tourism development can benefit and protect residents. On the topic of tourism in developing nations, and specifically in the Caribbean, researchers have been concerned with the problems of inequity and exclusion for local populations (Cohen 2002; McDavid & Ramajeessingh 2003; Crick 2003; Boxill 2004; Pattullo 2005). Tourism research has indicated that revenues from tourism in Caribbean countries generally benefit foreign business owners more than local citizens (Turner & Ash 1976; Pattullo 2005). The overdependence of the Caribbean on the tourism industry calls into question the extent to which tourism equates with growth for island nations (Jayawardena & Ramajeessingh 2003). The all-inclusive industry itself has been questioned for its ability to provide opportunities for local industries and workers. Despite its attraction for tourists seeking to escape to island destinations, enclave tourism has proven to be problematic for communities left outside of its protective boundaries (Freitag 1994; Crick 2003; Boxill 2004). Sustainable tourism development in the region requires consideration of the aspects of the industry that continue to be detrimental for residents of these locales.

As demonstrated in the above figures, tourism in Jamaica has clearly generated a great deal of revenue. However, the utilisation of tourism as a way to provide sustainable support to the economy has had a problematic impact on the island. According to a 2008 IMF report, economic growth in Jamaica has not correlated with increases in the tourism sector (International Monetary Fund 2008). Tourism research has indicated that revenues from tourism in Caribbean countries generally benefit foreign business owners more than local citizens (Turner & Ash 1976; Pattullo 2005). Leakage of tourist revenue, which occurs when foreign investments fail to stay inside the country, averages approximately 80% for the region. For Jamaica specifically, there is high foreign exchange outflow (nearly 40%) of revenue to foreign hotel owners' countries and few linkages with the local economy indicate that much of the tourism earnings do not stay in the country

(Jayawardena & Ramajeessingh 2003; Williams & Deslandes 2008; World Bank 2011). The mining industry has declined, now employing just one percent of the labour force, due to the lack of linkages with other economic sectors and the importation of most goods and services (World Bank 2011). Although efforts have been made to create better linkages between tourist resorts and local farmers, research suggests that this has not yet had a significant benefit for agricultural producers (Thomas-Hope & Jardine-Comrie 2007). Furthermore, the promotion of tourism in the country has corresponded with the neglect of local residents regarding environmental and health concerns that directly impact the population. The environmental burdens of tourism in Jamaica include the removal of coral reefs and wetlands, along with increased water usage and solid waste, and water pollution in resort areas (Thomas-Hope & Jardine-Comrie 2007; Dodman 2009; National Environment and Planning Agency 2011). The National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) has indicated that tourism is one of the major strains put on natural resources in Jamaica, including energy, water, raw materials, beaches, and waste disposal facilities. According to Dodman (2009: 213), 'Provisioning for the demands of international tourists, given the importance placed on this economic sector, has meant that providing proper environmental and sanitation services for hotels has often taken precedence over similar programmes for Jamaican citizens.'

Similarly, evidence from the health sector in Jamaica indicates that efforts to create workplace policies for HIV/AIDS education programming and testing, as well as attempts toward the provision of condoms in hotels, have not been successful (Figueroa 2008; Johnson 2012). Transactional sex with tourists has become a way for many men and women in the Caribbean to benefit from the industry despite their low socioeconomic status, low educational attainment, and lack of employability in the formal tourism sector. Studies applying anthropological methods for sex tourism research have demonstrated the significance of this type of tourism in communities that rely on the industry. The work of Cabezas (2002; 2009), Kempadoo (2001; 2004), Mullings (1999), O'Connell Davidson and Sánchez-Taylor (1999), Pruitt and LaFont (1995), and Sánchez-Taylor (2001) among others, describes the motivations of Caribbean women and men who utilize sex work as a means for gaining opportunities to improve their lives. Similar work, by such researchers as Aggleton (1999) and Padilla (2007, 2008), illustrate the practice of sex tourism among men who have sex with men (MSM) in the region. The implications of sex and tourism for the study of STI and HIV infection in the Caribbean are vast. As the region with the second highest overall prevalence rates of HIV/AIDS to Sub-Saharan Africa, understanding the link between sex and the tourism industry is vital for HIV prevention programming. The research of Boxill et al. (2005), Figueroa (2006, 2008; Figueroa et al. 2005), Kempadoo and Taitt (2006), and Padilla (2007; 2010; Padilla et al. 2008) has made significant progress towards demonstrating the negative effects of tourism on the

sexual health of Caribbean residents in tourist destinations. This is particularly problematic considering the incidence of sex tourism in Caribbean resort destinations; in Jamaica, the parishes with tourism-based economies have the highest HIV prevalence rates after its most urbanized area of St. Andrew (National HIV/STI Programme 2013). Despite work conducted by the Ministry of Health and Tourism Product Development Company (TPDCo), some tourism entities have expressed perceptions that the promotion of workplace policies on discrimination and HIV/AIDS education in resort areas will deter tourists from visiting (Figueroa 2008; Health Economics Unit 2009).

Local Perceptions of Tourism Shifts

While the effects of tourism on Caribbean populations are not universal, there are evidently negative sociocultural impacts for those who do not reap economic benefits from the growing tourism sector (de Albuquerque 1999; Mullings 1999; Taylor 1993; Cunningham 2006; Cabezas 2008). Many of the local women and men who have access to employment opportunities in the industry hold unskilled positions with relatively low social and income statuses, yet high turnover rates (Dunn & Dunn 2002; Pattullo 2005). Because of the structures that maintain exclusivity in the demand for tourism workers, as well as marginalize a large segment of the work force, opportunities for many Caribbean people to work legally in this sector are limited (Cabezas 2008). Increased tourism promotion leads to greater risk of criminalization for local people, as shown in current harassment laws that leave local vendors, taxi operators, and sex workers at risk of being arrested for interacting inappropriately with tourists (de Albuquerque 1999; Gmelch 2003; Mullings 1999; Ajagunna 2006). Local perspectives of tourism have been found to include perceived increases in crime, prostitution, and drug use in communities reliant upon tourism (Taylor 1993; Dunn & Dunn 2002; Pattullo 2005). Caribbean governments, including that of Jamaica, seem to avoid addressing illicit tourism-related practices in order to emphasize the overall benefit that tourist dollars bring to the region (Mullings 1999; Grenade 2007). The agendas of this and other Caribbean governments and private stakeholders promoting tourism include the elicitation of a natural, authentic sense of place and people for the consumption of tourists (Bolles 1992; Mullings 1999; Black 2001). Cultural forms, including music, language, food, and dance, are offered to foreign visitors along with accommodations and services as part of the tourism agenda. Tourists are provided relaxing settings in which they can consume the music of Bob Marley, cold Red Stripe beers, and select phrases of the local patois. Local people are expected to support this agenda for the 'greater good,' despite the lack of benefits that they may receive from participation in this, in effect, selling of place. The government here, as elsewhere, has encouraged appropriate behaviour and general friendliness towards tourists with 'Be Nice' campaigns in the past, and currently through the

‘Team Jamaica’ training for tourism-related workers (Turner & Ash 1976; Crick 2003). The Jamaican government is not a monolithic power that promotes tourism to the detriment of its citizens; there are, instead, multiple political and economic forces at work, with the tourism industry revealing alternate beneficial and detrimental roles.

The purpose of the research on which this paper is based was to explore the sociocultural, economic, and health impact of sex tourism in Negril, Jamaica. Unlike much of the previous work conducted on the topic, this ethnographic study aimed to reveal the ways in which the local population is affected by the practice, and to propose plausible solutions for reducing its negative ramifications for the sexual health of local male sex workers. Over the course of nine months spent in Negril, I conducted observations in places where interactions between locals and tourists were common, including beaches, restaurants, bars, and clubs. In addition, 53 total interviews were conducted on the topic of sex tourism with local residents, foreign tourists, health officials, and heads of multiple health-related NGOs in Jamaica. Of particular relevance here are the resident interviews in Negril, which included a variety of participants who work in the tourism industry. Shared perceptions of the tourism industry, along with its positive and negative associations for local men and women, illustrate relevant factors of tourism sustainability in Negril and demonstrate the varying degrees of marginalization within this particular population. The question with which interviews began asked how tourism has impacted Negril. For the most part, interview participants were able to state both positive and negative effects of tourism in the resort town, and the majority found the positive impact to be more significant. Among the benefits of tourism, both economic and social aspects were cited, such as financial and employment opportunities, cultural exchanges between Jamaicans and foreign tourists, and improved exposure to technology for locals. Tourism workers who have never left the island find opportunities to learn about the world through interactions with tourists; work in the industry provides access to spaces that are generally designated for tourists only.

Residents interviewed for the study found the negative aspects of tourism to include increased crime, drug use, harassment, sex work, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), as well as a decline in moral standards. One interviewee, a 33 year-old self-identified ‘hustler’¹ born in Negril stated:

What tourism do to this place? Tourism uplift this place. We live off tourism. Without tourism here, lot of people don’t have a job. ‘Caw when is a low season for tourism, most hotel lay off people, so when they lay off people now that’s when you get more people out of work, so that’s where you get more crime or more people lay back, and then they will go violent and then they gotta turn to something different.

Similarly, taxi drivers and employees in bars and restaurants frequently shared complaints about the lack of tourists during the slow season. One informant who sells CDs for a living said during an interview that he planned to leave Negril: ‘I

can't take it anymore here. If the tourists is not here, there's no money here.' Due to the decrease in popularity of Spring Break, there seem to be fewer periods of heavy tourist influx outside of the large resorts than in the past, which has clearly taken a toll on vendors, transportation workers, and small business owners. Several other participants, both Jamaican and foreign-born, stated that there would be no Negril without tourism. As a fishing village turned vacation spot for hippie tourists in the 1960s, the resort town has seen incredible economic and demographic shifts during the course of its growth. The head of the Negril's Chamber of Commerce, an organization involved in local tourism promotion and the closest entity to a governing body in the town, mentioned in an interview that he believes up to 90% of the current population of Negril originates outside of the town.

A significant component of the changes that have occurred in Negril over the last twenty years involves the springing up of all-inclusive resorts along its Seven-mile beach and adjacent cliffs. As a town with little development until the 1990s, accommodations in Negril once included mainly guesthouses and small hotels (of under 50 rooms) that were owned by Jamaican nationals. In order to restrict the development of large structures, the Negril Land Authority only allowed buildings that did not exceed the height of the tallest tree in the area. However, government efforts to promote the development of tourist accommodations have since provided tax incentives to foreign hoteliers and allowed the importation of construction material. These incentives have encouraged the building of large, all-inclusive properties by international chains. This change is particularly perceptible to native Negrilians and long-term tourism workers who have been in the town for the last decade or more. One informant, a 45 year-old taxi driver, has been living just outside of Negril and working in the town for over fifteen years. When asked about the impact of tourism in Negril, he suggested that all-inclusives have a significant impact on the local industry. He expressed that tourism in general has been 'going down since '97,' and that it is now harder to find tourists to take on tour, since the majority have all-inclusive packages for that purpose. In the aforementioned interview with Negril's Chamber of Commerce, the president of the organization spoke about the political challenges of directing tourism in Negril towards creating benefits for the local population. Because the Ministry of Tourism is influenced by 'industry players,' he finds that the interests of the larger hotel chains are protected more than those of smaller, locally owned businesses. The theme of all-inclusives was a common one during interviews with hoteliers and tourism employees alike. The proprietor of a beach hotel who has owned the establishment for over twenty years shared that while his guests spend money at restaurants, bars, tourist sites, and use local transportation, large hotel chain guests pre-pay and tend to buy things only within their chosen resort. Andrew, a 33 year-old 'hustler,' also spoke about tourists who fail to leave the confines of the all-inclusives: 'Dem fantasize Jamaica, save dey money for days, weeks, years, come here, but nevah reach. 'Dem nah really wanna socialize wit' de people like dat,

‘dem nah mind go in a all-inclusive hotel, eat di food, drink de beer, an go back ah dem yard. [They fantasize about Jamaica, they save money to come here, but they never really arrive. They don’t really want to socialize with people, they don’t mind staying in the all-inclusive eating, drinking, and then going back home.]’ This quote is indicative of a feeling among some local people that tourists, by confining themselves to all-inclusive resorts, fail to interact with Jamaican people and experience their culture.

This particular informant also spoke of tourists’ fears regarding locals in the resort town. Andrew finds that tourists are afraid of vendors due to the warnings of travel agents and hotel employees who insist that they avoid people on the beach. Several other interviewees suggested similar perceptions about tourists’ fears, and their inclinations to stay inside resort compounds as a result. This is an aspect of a broader topic, that of tourist harassment, which came up in nearly every interview conducted for this study. Negril residents find that tourists are frequently harassed by vendors who will not take ‘no’ for an answer while they are attempting to sell their wares, be they crafts or illegal drugs. Tourist harassment is enough of a concern to business owners that it is a frequent topic of discussion for the members of Negril’s Chamber of Commerce. During an interview at the local branch of the Tourism Product Development Company, which handles mandatory training and licensing for tourism employees throughout the country, the representative stated that training includes steps on approaching and dealing with tourists. However, she finds that vendors who pass the training still incite complaints from tourists about their aggressive approaches to selling, and blames it on lack of education and the ‘mentality’ of the people. Vendors, from her perspective, can be excessively persistent and take the attitude that they are owed something by foreign tourists they view as being wealthy. Local men and women can be charged with harassment by the police as well as the Courtesy Corps, which protects tourist areas and has recently granted its officers the ability to arrest. In addition to complaints about tourist harassment, many local persons shared their experiences regarding the unfair manner in which some residents are accused of the behaviour. Several interview participants stated that vendors are unduly hassled by police for selling merchandise without licenses or for bothering potential tourist clients. This criminalization of local people is an extreme example of the unsustainable nature of the current tourism model, whereby foreign visitors are isolated and protected while residents are restricted and punished due to this ‘need’ for protection.

Discussion

The significance of the tourism industry in the Caribbean is undeniable in terms of its economic impact. For Jamaica, it has provided stable revenue at a time of decline for other long-standing industries. Due to the nation’s situation of extreme indebtedness, participation in the global economy through tourism is required to

boost the foreign currency generated by remittances and mining. This reliance on tourism, however, presents multiple challenges when considered from the perspective of sustainability. The lack of linkages between tourism and other sectors, particularly agriculture, relates to the problem of leakage in Jamaica: the importation of food, construction materials, and various supplies for hotels means that tourism revenue frequently leaves the country while local industries continue to suffer. Additionally, the sociocultural ramifications of tourism have left an indelible mark on residents of resort areas. The number of jobs created by the industry, while noteworthy, does not solve the significant unemployment and underemployment problems for local populations. Residents working both formally and informally in the tourism sector are subject to shifts that involve increasing all-inclusive accommodations and the decline of locally owned businesses. Some educated, skilled workers can attain formal employment in the tourism sector, while many struggle to find spaces within the informal tourism industry in which to earn a living.

Negril is a magnet for entrepreneurial men and women from various parts of the island seeking to earn from the exceedingly profitable tourism industry. Men in Negril are apt to self-identify as ‘hustlers’ when their incomes are generated through jobs selling CDs, jewellery, souvenirs, and drugs, among other items, to foreign tourists. In addition, many local men take on the roles of informal tour guides and drivers for visitors in the town. Men who engage in hustling are often of low socioeconomic status and lack formal educations. Even successful hustlers who are able to significantly boost their incomes can be stigmatized within the local community for their participation in illegal activities, including sex tourism. There are local women who participate in these activities, yet they are more likely to identify as vendors or as sex workers, respectively. While many men are also employed as chefs, water sports operators, and construction workers, conversations and interviews with informants indicated that self-proclaimed hustlers tend to work solely in the informal sector. These men are cultural brokers who provide for visitors’ needs in the tourist areas. During interviews with men who hustle tourists, some informants shared that in exchange for providing services to tourists, they can get money, gifts, invitations to parties and bars, paid drinks and meals, and trips around the island, among other compensation. Men who hustle a living tend to have increased social interactions with foreign tourists, putting them in positions to sell sex to these guests as well. These men, known locally as ‘gigolos,’ act as companions, tour guides, and protectors of women spending their vacations on the island. In return for sex and companionship, the men receive gifts, cash, local tours, and opportunities to travel abroad. In Negril, as in other tourism destinations, men who work as taxi drivers and hotel entertainers are perceived as regular participants in sex tourism. Hustling can be viewed as a last resort option for local individuals seeking ways to participate in the growing profits from tourism, yet lack the skills to find gainful employment in the hotel chains that consist-

ently spring up in resort areas. Despite the threat raised by the significant police presence for these individuals, they make a living by offering services, either wanted or unwanted, to tourists from the periphery of tourist enclaves. By hustling a living, illicitly selling unlicensed tourism services, drugs, and/or sex, some individuals make opportunities to earn from the sector where there otherwise would be none. Many are caught between the tourist demand for illegal activities and the ever-increasing presence of law enforcement to shelter foreign visitors.

As in other tourist resort areas in Jamaica and throughout the Caribbean, Negril provides an escape for vacationers from abroad seeking the sun, sand, sex, and sea that these islands offer. It is a place that was created and has been maintained as a touristic space where foreign visitors are catered to by Jamaican men and women. The question remains as to whether or not the development of tourism can be relied upon as a sustainable source of revenue and employment. The increasing numbers of cruise ship passengers and stopover visitors are not likely to decline significantly in the very near future. However, the issues of indebtedness, underemployment, and crime are inextricably linked with the crime and harassment that tourists experience on vacation in Jamaica. This, in turn, leads more visitors to choose to remain inside all-inclusive resorts, leaving local residents modest gains from the tremendous profitability of the industry. Finally, the increased STI/HIV prevalence in popular tourist centres adds to the vulnerability of already marginalized local populations. Because condom use and HIV prevention efforts are perceived as threats to the tourism product, the sexual health of residents seems to come second to the state tourism agenda. In order for tourism to be a sustainable enterprise for the future, alternative models of tourism that are more inclusive of local populations must be considered. This would include the development of better linkages with other industries and improvements to the local infrastructure, allowing for increased and consistent employment opportunities for residents.

Conclusion

The published literature and results of the ethnographic research cited here indicate that, for many Caribbean people, residents' needs have been subsumed to perceived profits from the tourism industry. Recent tourism shifts have left a significant portion of the population without the resources required to benefit fully from the industry; the enclaves constructed to attract tourists have effectively kept residents from reaping its benefits. While these issues are certainly concerns for many researchers and government officials in Jamaica, a dire need exists for further consideration of local communities in the creation and maintenance of tourism policy. The issues of profitability should be weighed in relation to the long-term sustainability of tourism development in Jamaica and other islands with tourism-based economies throughout the region. The tourism-based agenda of the

state cannot be entirely effective as long as the industry is developed without regards to the issue of equity and sustainability for local communities.

Dr. Lauren C. Johnson is a faculty member in the College of Education at the University of North Georgia. Her research interests include sex tourism, masculinity, and the sociocultural impact of violent crime in the Caribbean region. She is currently conducting work on diversity and human rights in education. E-mail: lcj5@caa.columbia.edu

Notes

- ¹ The term 'hustler' in Negril is generally used to describe men who work in the informal, and often illicit, tourism industry. These men work various jobs as unlicensed taxi and tour services, street vendors, drug dealers, and other forms of employment through which they 'hustle' tourists for money.

References

- Ajagunna, Ibrahim (2006): 'Crime and Harrassment in Jamaica: Consequences for Sustainability of the Tourism Industry', *International Journal of Centemporary Hospitality Management*, 18:3, 253-259.
- Alleyne, Dillon & Ian Boxill (2003): 'The Impact of Crime on Tourist Arrivals in Jamaica', *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 5, 381-391.
- Life and Debt*, (2001) Film. Directed by Black, Stephanie. U.S.: Tuff Gong Pictures
- Bolles, A. Lynn (1992): 'Sand, Sea, and the Forbidden', *Transforming Anthropology*, 3:1, 30-34.
- Boxill, Ian (2004): 'Towards an Alternative Tourism for Jamaica', *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 16:4, 269-272.
- Cabezas, Amalia L. (2008): 'Tropical Blues: Tourism and Social Exclusion in the Dominican Republic', *Latin American Perspectives*, 35:160, 21-36.
- Caribbean Tourism Organization (2014): Latest Statistics 2013. Kingston, Jamaica: Caribbean Tourism Organization.
- Cohen, Erik (2002): 'Authenticity, Equity and Sustainability in Tourism', *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 10:4, 267-276.
- Crick, Anne P. (2003): 'Internal Marketing of Attitudes in Caribbean Tourism', *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 15:3, 161-166.
- Cunningham, Jennifer (2006): 'Sex, sun and HIV', *The New York Amsterdam News*, August 24-30, 2006, 2.
- de Albuquerque, Klaus (1999): 'Tourism and Crime in the Caribbean', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 26:4, 968-984.
- Dodman, David (2009): 'Globalization, Tourism and Local Living Conditions on Jamaica's North Coast', *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, 30, 204-219.
- Dunn, Hopeton S. & Leith L. Dunn (2002): *People and Tourism: Issues and Attitudes in the Jamaican Hospitality Industry*, Kingston, Arawak Publications.
- Figuroa, J. Peter (2008): 'The HIV Epidemic in the Caribbean: Meeting the Challenges of Achieving Universal Access to Prevention, Treatment, and Care', *West Indian Medical Journal*, 57:3, 195-203.

- Freitag, Tilman G. (1994): 'Enclave Tourism Development: For Whom the Benefits Roll?', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 21:3, 538-554.
- Gmelch, George (2003): *Behind the Smile: The Working Lives of Caribbean Tourism*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press.
- Grenade, Wendy C. (2007): Balancing Economic Development and Security: The case of Tourism and HIV/AIDS in Grenada. *The 8th Annual SALISES Conference 2007*. Trinidad & Tobago.
- Health Economics Unit, Center for Health Economics (2009): HIV and Tourism Study: Exploring the Economic Impact of HIV/AIDS on the Tourism Industry in Selected Caribbean Destinations:
http://www.pancap.org/docs/World_Bank_Studies/Revised%20Final%20Report%20-%20Tourism%20and%20HIV-AIDS%20Study.pdf (accessed 10 June 2012).
- Hunter, Colin (1997): 'Sustainable Tourism as an Adaptive Paradigm', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 24:4, 850-867.
- International Monetary Fund (2008): Jamaica: 2008 Article IV Consultation--Staff Report; Staff Supplement; Public Information Notice on the Executive Board Discussion; and Statement by the Executive Director for Jamaica: <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2008/cr08199.pdf> (accessed 1 January 2010).
- Issa, John J. & Chandana Jayawardena (2003): 'The "All-inclusive" Concept in the Caribbean', *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 15:3, 167-171.
- Jamaica Tourist Board (2011): Annual Travel Statistics 2010:
<http://www.jtbonline.org/statistics/Annual%20Travel/Annual%20Travel%20Statistics%202010.pdf> (accessed 1 March 2012).
- Jayawardena, Chandana (2003): 'Mastering Caribbean tourism', *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 14:2, 88-93.
- Jayawardena, Chandana & Diaram Ramajeessingh (2003): 'Performance of Tourism Analysis: A Caribbean Perspective', *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 15:3, 176-179.
- Johnson, Lauren C. (2012): *Selling Masculinity and Profiting from Marginality: Sex Work and Tourism in a Jamaican Resort Town*, Doctoral Dissertation, University of South Florida.
- Johnston, Jake & Juan Antonio Montecino (2011): Jamaica: Macroeconomic Policy, Debt and the IMF: <http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/jamaica-qtr-2011-04.pdf> (accessed May 2011).
- Kempadoo, Kamala (2004): *Sexing the Caribbean: Gender, Race, and Sexual Labor*, New York, Routledge.
- McDavid, Hilton & Diaram Ramajeessingh (2003): 'The State and Tourism: A Caribbean Perspective', *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 15:3, 180-183.
- McKercher, Bob (1993): 'The Unrecognized Threat to Tourism: Can Tourism Survive "Sustainability"?'', *Tourism Management*, April, 131-136.
- Mullings, Beverly (1999): 'Globalization, Tourism, and the International Sex Trade', Kempadoo (ed.): *Sun, Sex, and Gold: Tourism and Sex Work in the Caribbean*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- National Environment and Planning Agency (2011): State of the Environment Report 2010. Kingston: The National Environment and Planning Agency.
- National HIV/STI Programme (2011): HIV Epidemic Update: Facts & Figures 2010. Ministry of Health.
- National HIV/STI Programme, Ministry of Health (2013): *HIV Epidemic Update: Facts & Figures 2012*: <http://www.nhpjamaica.org/hiv-epidemic-update-facts-figures-2012> (accessed 1 January 2014).
- Pattullo, Polly (2005): *Last Resorts: The Cost of Tourism in the Caribbean*, London, Latin America Bureau.
- Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit, World Bank (2011): Jamaica - Country economic memorandum: Unlocking growth:
<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2011/05/14310141/jamaica-country-economic-memorandum-unlocking-growth> (accessed 1 June 2012).

- Statistical Institute of Jamaica (2012): *Labour Market & Earnings*. Kingston: Statistical Institute of Jamaica: <http://statinja.gov.jm/LabourForce/UnemployedLabourForceByAgeGroup.aspx> (accessed 10 June 2012).
- Taylor, Frank Fonda (1993): *To Hell with Paradise: A History of the Jamaican Tourist Industry*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Thomas-Hope, Elizabeth & Adonna Jardine-Comrie (2007): 'Valuation of Environmental Resources for Tourism in Small Island Developing States: Implications for Planning in Jamaica', *International Development Planning Review*, 29:1, 93-112.
- Turner, Louis & John Ash (1976): *The Golden Hordes: International Tourism and the Pleasure Periphery*, New York, St. Martin's Press.
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2014): Global Study on Homicide: http://www.unodc.org/documents/gsh/pdfs/2014_GLOBAL_HOMICIDE_BOOK_web.pdf (accessed 1 June 2014).
- Weisbrot, Mark (2011): Jamaica's Crippling Debt Crisis Must Serve as a Warning to Greece, *The Guardian*, July 22, 2011.
- Williams, Densil A. & Derrick Deslandes (2008): 'Motivation for Service Sector Foreign Direct Investments in Emerging Economies: Insights from the Tourism Industry in Jamaica', *The Round Table*, 97:396, 419-437.
- World Tourism Organization (2014): *Tourism Highlights*, Edition 2013. Madrid: World Tourism Organization.
- World Bank, Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit (2011): Jamaica: Unlocking Growth. 2012: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTJAMAICA/Resources/ShortVersionCEMJamaica2011.pdf> (accessed 15 June 2012).
- World Travel & Tourism Council (2012): Travel & Tourism: Economic Impact 2012 Jamaica: http://www.wttc.org/site_media/uploads/downloads/jamaica2012.pdf (accessed 1 September 2012).

Enacting Green Consumers: The Case of the Scandinavian Preppies

By Christian Fuentes

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to develop and illustrate an analytic approach that brings the active making and makings of green consumer images to the fore. Efforts to “know” the green consumers have generated multiple representations. Enactments of the green consumer are not innocent but also play a role in shaping how we understand and approach sustainable consumption. Because of this it is important to examine and critically discuss how green consumers are enacted today.

This paper develops an approach that allows us to examine how green consumers are enacted and discuss the consequences these constructions might have for sustainability. Theoretically, a performativity approach drawing on theories from Science and Technology Studies (STS) and economic sociology is used to discuss the enactment of green consumers. Empirically, focus is on Boomerang – a Swedish fashion retailer, brand, and producer – and its marketing practices.

The analysis shows how the marketing work of the Boomerang Company leads to the enactment of the Green Scandinavian Preppy. This specific version of the green consumer is a combination of the knowledgeable green connoisseur – a consumer that knows quality when he/she sees it – and the green hedonist in search of the good life. The Green Scandinavian Preppy wants to enjoy nature, go sailing, and do so wearing fashionable quality clothes. This is a consumer that knows quality, appreciates design, and has the means to pay for both. While this is a version of the green consumer that might be appealing and thus have the potential to promote a version of green consumption, it is also a green consumer image that has lost much of its political power as green consumption is framed as simply another source of pleasure and identity-making.

Keywords: Green marketing, consumer images, performativity, fashion, sustainability

Introduction

The nature of the green consumer has been a topic of discussion within and outside academia. Efforts to “know” the green consumers have generated multiple representations. Green consumers have been described as alternative identity seekers (Thompson & Coskuner-Balli 2007a, 2007b; Connolly & Prothero 2003, 2008) and critical and reflexive consumers that challenge and question the capitalist society (Harrison et al. 2005; Cherrier & Murray 2007). But green consumers have also been described as rational individuals, information-processing and calculating entities that make informed choices regarding quality and price issues while considering “ethical” values as well (Shaw et al. 2000; Schröder and McEachern 2004; Harrison et al. 2005; Leonidou et al. 2010). As numerous studies have stated in the past, there are multiple and conflicting descriptions of the green consumer.

These descriptions of the green consumer are not innocent. They not only describe the green consumer, they also work to perform specific versions of the green consumer, to configure green consumers (regarding performativity see Law & Urry 2004; Licoppe 2010; Cova & Cova 2012). Enactments of the green consumer also have power in that they play a role in shaping how we understand and approach sustainable consumption. Determining who the green consumer is – as an ideal type – also involves determining how sustainability should be approached.

Because of this it is important to examine and critically discuss how green consumers are enacted today. How is the green consumer made in contemporary consumer culture? What do specific versions of the green consumer mean for the ways in which we approach sustainability?

While previous research on green consumption and sustainability often points out that there are different ways of viewing green consumers, there are few studies that explore how these images are made and what they may mean for sustainability.

Against this background, the aim of this paper is to develop and illustrate an analytic approach that brings the active making and makings of green consumer images to the fore. What I want to do is to develop an approach that allows us first to examine more closely how green consumers are enacted and second discuss the consequences these constructions might have for sustainability. By doing this I hope to contribute to the development of a more critical and reflexive approach to sustainability.

Theoretically, I take a performativity approach to the study of marketing and the enactment of consumers. The starting point for the argument made in this paper is that consumers do not simply exist out there but are made. More specifically, I use the concept of performativity as it has been used within Science and Technology Studies (STS) and, more recently, economic sociology (e.g. Barry &

Slater 2002; Law & Urry 2004; Callon et al. 2007,). Somewhat simplified, one can say that this strand of performativity studies has set out to investigate how the market (or the economy) is socio-materially performed by economics (Callon 1998; Barry & Slater 2002). Drawing on Actor-Network Theory (Callon 1991; Law 1991; Latour 2000, 2005,), the work of Callon shows that economic processes can be “treated as just another kind of socio-technical-discursive arrangement” in which economics is just one of the elements of the arrangement, shaping and being shaped in the network (Barry & Slater 2002: 180).

In the field of marketing, the ideas of Callon and colleagues have been used to analyse and discuss how marketing practices, theories, and devices work to construct markets (e.g. , Araujo 2007; Kjellberg & Helgesson 2007; Cochoy 2009). These studies have argued that marketing practices are to be understood as market-shaping practices (Araujo 2007). Marketing (potentially) contributes to the constitution of markets (Kjellberg & Helgesson 2006).

Marketing is then not only about promoting products, it socio-materially constructs them (Fuentes 2011; Fuentes 2014). Marketing not only tries to find consumers “out there”, it often plays an important role in bringing these consumers to life (Cova & Cova 2012). And marketing not only dictates how employees should conduct themselves, it shapes their subjectivities (Skålén et al. 2008; Skålén 2009). From this perspective, the mission of critically oriented marketing scholars and other social scientists is to empirically examine, to paraphrase Callon, how marketing technologies perform markets and market entities (see also Araujo et al. 2008; Cova & Cova 2012). This is precisely what I intend to do here, critically examine the construction of one type of market entity: the green consumer.

Empirically, I focus on a specific case of green consumer enactment. In what follows, I examine how the Swedish retailer, brand, and producer Boomerang, through its marketing work, constructs a specific version of the green consumer.

There are at least three reasons why the Boomerang Company and its marketing work is a suitable case for the discussion of green consumer enactment. First, private corporations and their marketing work play a crucial role in the enactment of green consumers. Although far from the only actors involved in the production of green consumers their vast financial resources and marketing knowledge and skill make them powerful players. Second, the Boomerang Company has clearly profiled products as well as well-defined brands, which makes the enactment of consumers easier to study. Third, Boomerang is also a good example because the company’s work to green itself is fairly recent, on- going, and has not yet “settled”.

The analysis below builds on material collected as part of a larger on-going ethnographic study of Swedish fashion retailers and their sustainability strategies.¹ This larger study, in which also two additional retailers are studied (Åhléns and Myrorna), aims to examine what sustainability issues are marketed, how these are marketed, and how sustainability is reframed through this marketing work. More

specifically, the analysis presented below draws on four types of materials generated by four types of research practices carried out by the author and a research assistant working on the project.

First, we collected media material using the “Retriever” database. The search focused on the retailer’s name and keywords connected to sustainability such as “ecological”, “green”, “environment”, and “fair trade”. Second, we carried out interviews. Six in-depth interviews with sustainability strategists and other staff in leading positions were carried out. Third, marketing material was collected from the stores (brochures and catalogues for examples) and from the retailers’ webpages (printed and saved digitally). Fourth, and finally, we also carried out observations of the stores. The observations focused on the cities of Lund, Helsingborg, and Göteborg. Approximately 20 observations have been carried out during 2012-2013.

The different types of materials generated are in the analysis treated symmetrically. Drawing on the performative perspective outlined above, I see these different materials as records of how Boomerang markets itself and its sustainability work. The media material allows us to read about what managers have said in interviews with journalists and how these utterances are framed in the media. They are simultaneously an example of how retailers market themselves using the media and how the media portrays the CSR strategies of companies. In the interviews we can see how managers market/describe their retail organization and CSR work when asked about it by academics. In the marketing material collected we see how Boomerang frames sustainability issues and markets itself and its products using both print and digital media. Through the observations made at the store we can see how the retail space of Boomerang is used to market sustainability issues along with the products on display.

As will be illustrated in the analysis, there is considerable similarity among these different mediums. The articles in the media, the interviews with managers, the marketing material, and the store displays all tell a similar story.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. First I present a brief presentation of Boomerang and the ways in which this company markets itself and its products. Next I take a closer look at how Boomerang markets itself as sustainable. This is followed by an analysis of the kind of green consumer enacted in and through this marketing work. The paper ends with a discussion of the importance of tracing the enactment of green consumers and discussing the possible impact that these configurations may have on sustainability issues.

Marketing the Boomerang Lifestyle

Boomerang, one can read on the webpage, was started in 1976 by the two enthusiasts Kenneth Andram and Peter Wilton. The plan was to develop a Scandinavian

brand of “premium quality clothes” and the first collection consisted of a range of piques, shirts, cords, and canvas trousers. On the webpage one can read that:

....the two colleagues bonded over a dream about something different. Freedom. Something of their own. They also shared the same fundamental ethical values and the conviction that quality is always better than quantity. (www.boomerang.com 7 March 2012)

Today the Boomerang Company has 32 privately owned stores, more than 200 retailers and operates in 6 countries. They develop and carry three collections of casual quality clothes: “Man”, “Woman” and “Junior”.

While Boomerang uses a broad range of channels and devices to market itself and its products, the stores are Boomerang’s main marketing tool. Boomerang stores are located at city centres – on shopping streets – or at shopping malls. Most stores are fairly small, well-organized and clearly thematized. At the Boomerang stores consumers can read up on products, ask store assistants’ advice, pick up brochures and other marketing material, and, of course, purchase Boomerang products. And, as I learned through my fieldwork, considerable work is also put into the window displays – which display the product lines and visualize the theme of the Boomerang brand. However, as the field note below illustrates, stores are not only thematized to communicate the Boomerang brand but also organized to make shopping practices easy to carry out, they are organized to enable shopping.

As I enter the store I am struck by how well-organized and clearly thematized this retail space is. The store has been newly renovated and the entrance is described as having a “New York style”. The store is spacious with plenty of room to move along the aisles. Sparse signage and tidy display tables and hangers give the impression of an efficient store. The clothes seem to follow a nautical theme – a lot of blue stripes. Shirts, piques, canvas trousers, jeans and dress jackets. But also t-shirts and hoodies are on display. The display tables, the shelves, and even the cashier counter are of dark wood. Behind the cashier counter there is a large poster depicting a landscape: rocky shores, a white and red lighthouse and a grouping of red wooden cabins. On some of the display tables one can find marketing material – brochures and catalogues. I pick one up and browse. It contains the same images and texts one can find on the company’s website. (Field notes, 13 February 2012)

The stores are in many ways smooth shopping spaces. The shopping trails of the Boomerang stores are easily manoeuvrable, the products easy to find, and store assistants helpful. The Boomerang stores are then marketing devices that make products available for shopping and simultaneously work to promote the Boomerang products lines and brand.

The Boomerang webpage is another important marketing device. The Boomerang webpage (boomerangstore.com) contains information about the company’s philosophy, history, its products, the stores’ locations, and business hours. Visitors can find customer service information and information regarding Boomerang’s customer club. The webpage also works to market Boomerang’s sustainability work. Here consumers can find information regarding charities that Boomer-

ang supports, the company's code of conduct, and details about Boomerang's different sustainable product lines.

The page also links to two other virtual platforms used for the marketing of Boomerang: Facebook and YouTube. Visitors following these links find commercials, virtual catalogues, information about special offers, updates regarding new collections, and much more.

Finally, the Boomerang Company markets itself and its products by participating in a number of fashion fairs and events. The participation in different fairs is documented and used as marketing material in the other channels (most notably on the Facebook page).

So the Boomerang Company markets itself and its products through a number of practices and employs various channels and devices. But what is it more exactly that Boomerang offers its customers? I would argue that Boomerang sells more than clothes; like many other companies today they also sell a style and lifestyle. Boomerang calls its style "Scandinavian Preppy".

Right from the outset, they [the founders of the company] drew up plans for a Scandinavian brand of premium quality casual clothes. The first spring collection presented a range of piqués, cotton shirts, oxford shirts, cord and canvas trousers solid or in stripes. Clothes that to this day still form the basis of the Boomerang range and style that we call Scandinavian Preppy (www.boomerang.com 7 March 2012)

Boomerang products, this retailer makes clear, are for those interested in high-end quality clothing and who wish to be associated with the "preppy style" that these products convey.

More specifically, this style is constructed by combining three different themes in the marketing of Boomerang clothing: the nautical, the Scandinavian, and the preppy. Scandinavian Preppy is here constructed as a desirable consumer identity. Being Scandinavian, this marketing material tells consumers, means being both design and nature-interested.

"Design interested" is in this context to be understood as a marker of sophisticated taste, a signifier of good taste. Being "design interested" then means having good taste. References to Scandinavian design, or simplicity connects this ethnic identity to both a specific aesthetic and a sophisticated taste. Similarly references to "quality" products or well-made products are not simply ways of saying that Boomerang products are properly manufactured and durable (although Boomerang says this too). References to "quality" signify "expensive", "high-end products". That is, products that only the affluent can afford.

Scandinavian is here also connected to nature, or "being natural". Images of young (white) models dressed in Boomerang's "preppy style" clothes standing on rocky shores, with the ocean behind them or standing in front of picturesque wooden cabins reproduces a romanticized image of Sweden and Swedes that one often sees in tourism advertisements (Gössling & Hultman 2006, Hultman &

Cederholm 2006). Being Scandinavian means having a special, even natural connection to nature. At play here are thus both ethnicity and class constructions.

Underlying this marketing work is the idea that consumers have lifestyles, consumers partake in a set of interlinked practices not only to fulfil utilitarian needs but also to express a narrative of self-identity (Giddens 1997). A lifestyle then is best expressed through the choosing and performing of a set of specific (consumption) practices. This is what Boomerang is aiming at. This company not only sells “quality products” – they market a lifestyle, a way of life, a set of interlined practices through which a specific consumer identity – the Scandinavian Preppy – can be enacted and maintained (in different versions of course).

Greening the Boomerang Lifestyle

There is a reason our logo is a boomerang. We believe that what you give is also what you get back. That is why we have created the Boomerang Effect. That means you can return your Boomerang clothes to the shop when you no longer want them. As our thanks for your contribution, you will get a 10% discount on a new garment, but above all, you will be helping to make sure the clothing is re-used. (www.boomerang.se 27 February 2012)

When marketing itself as a sustainable company, Boomerang re-writes its own history, giving its logo and name a new meaning. The text above captures the core of the sustainability strategy of Boomerang: to encourage recycling and re-use in different ways. The company collects old garments and resells them, labelling them as “vintage” and thereby inscribing them with new value (see also Fredriksson 2013):

Boomerang Vintage garments are products that, although new to you, have history. They have been worn and loved by someone that then has chosen to pass them on. By doing this the garments are given a new life and you a style that is only yours. (www.boomerang.se 16 February 2013).

Products not suitable for reselling in the vintage line are instead remade into furniture (sofas or futons for example) in their “Boomerang Home” product line. Finally, waste products (pieces of textile and so on) from the manufacturing process of their regular products are used to make a separate line of products: The Boomerang Effect Collection. Boomerang works thus to encourage recycling, upcycling, and re-use. The company reports having received over 7,000 clothing items for recycling (www.boomerang.se 27 February 2012).

Boomerang uses its website and Facebook page to promote its sustainability work. Boomerang’s Facebook page, for example, promotes both its vintage products and the Boomerang effect product line. Here one can read posts that promote “Scandinavian Blue carpet made of recycled Boomerang garments!” or that inform consumers about Boomerang’s new charity work. Similarly, on the Boomerang webpage consumers can read about the company’s work to recycle their garments. Consumers can read texts presenting the Boomerang effect concept and

“philosophy”, the Vintage collection, the Boomerang effect collection (products made from the excess material generated by the regular manufacturing process of Boomerang’s clothes), and the Boomerang Home collection (furniture and carpets made from recycled Boomerang garments). The website also includes information about Boomerang’s Code of Conduct and the company’s broader commitment to selling quality (durable) products.

Boomerang has also been skilful in getting media attention for its sustainability efforts, which are covered in numerous articles. For example, in an article in *Dagens Industri*, Boomerang’s designer Catti Lange talks about the quality of Boomerang’s products:

Boomerang garments are very high quality and can be re-used several times before they wear out. And when they cannot be used anymore, they can be recycled as rag rugs, for instance. (Catti Lange, Boomerang designer, quoted in *Dagens Industri*, page 11, 8 November 2008)

Boomerang and its reselling and recycling concept has also been written about in home interior decorating magazines such as *Allt i Hemmet* and *Sköna Hem*, as well as in the daily papers such as *Dagens Nyheter*, *Svenska Dagbladet*, *Göteborgs Posten* and in such free papers as *Metro* and *City Stockholm*. For the most part, these articles describe the Boomerang sustainability concept and work. Critical questions are seldom included in the articles. The media is here just another marketing channel for Boomerang, a platform through which the company can communicate its sustainability concept to consumers.

In addition, Boomerang does some advertisement for its sustainability line “the Boomerang effect” and it also markets its sustainability work at different events such as the Econow Fair and Stockholm Fashion Week.

Within marketing the stores are regarded as the main marketing tool for retailers (see, e.g. Turley & Milliman 2000; Kent 2007; Soars 2009). This is the interface between company and products and a meeting point between products and consumers. It is at the stores that consumers can touch, feel, and even smell the products. It is through the stores that consumers can try out products, consult store assistants, read marketing material, and educate themselves about the brand and its CSR activities.

At the Boomerang stores consumers can find information regarding the special “hand in old Boomerang garments get 10 % off on a new product” offer and, of course, also hand in old Boomerang products. Consumers can also shop the Boomerang effect collection, which is often displayed separately. Here consumers can browse through this line, pick up a brochure, and read up on the sustainability project or simply note that there is such a thing as a sustainability line at Boomerang. In some of the Boomerang stores, consumers can also find the vintage line consisting of old Boomerang garments. Although far from the messy, alternative, and informal second-hand marketplaces described in the literature (Crewe & Gregson 1998; Gregson & Crewe 1998 Gregson et al. 2000), the vintage line

gives these Boomerang stores an air of “retro retailer” (Crewe et al. 2003) and makes the sustainability theme more visible for consumers.

In sum, the Boomerang stores work to educate consumers on the company’s sustainability efforts, make it possible for them to recycle old garments, and offer them the opportunity to purchase the company’s “green” products.

So, Boomerang markets its sustainability efforts mainly through its PR relations, website, and stores. But what does this sustainability work offer the Boomerang consumers? How do the company’s marketing practices work to make sustainability meaningful to these consumers?

Drawing on the idea of the Scandinavian Preppy, Boomerang formulates a specific sustainability problem and solution. To frame its sustainability work and products Boomerang reproduces the notion that we live in a consumer society. Focusing on the environmental problems of the throwaway consumer society the company tells consumers that we purchase too many easily discarded products. The answer, however, is not to stop consuming altogether. Instead the solution to this problem, Boomerang tells consumers, is twofold. First, to purchase quality products that can stand the test of time and, second, when these products for some reason become obsolete in the eyes of their owners, to re-sell or re-cycle them:

Ever since we started Boomerang in 1976, nature has been our great source of inspiration. The sea, the rocks and the waves which never abate. The ice and snow that freezes and melts, and freezes again. A never-ending cycle. Exactly the way we want our clothes to be.

That is why we have created The Boomerang Effect. This means that you can hand in your old Boomerang garments in the shop when you no longer use them. Some of them we will mark with the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation “Good Environmental Choice” and give a second chance as Boomerang Vintage in selected shops. But even the garments which cannot be sold will be recycled in other forms.

When you come in to have a look at what’s new this spring, bring the jacket or the favourite shirt that’s been worn. To show our gratitude, we will give you a 10% discount when you buy something new and at the same time you are contributing to a more durable and better world. (www.boomerang.com 7 March 2012)

In this text we see how Boomerang and its products are connected to nature. Instead of being a part of the ever-faster “cycle of invention, acceptance, and discard” that is fashion (Fletcher 2012: 225), Boomerang, we are told, wants its products to be part of a never-ending cycle, to be part of a “natural” cycle. In a way, Boomerang is here addressing both the material and social dimensions of product obsolescence (on design and obsolescence see, e.g. Tham 2008, Fletcher 2012). When it is simply a matter of social obsolescence – previous owners might want to change style or simply want something new – the garment is resold and given new value as “vintage”. When instead the clothing item is too worn, it is used to make a new product, such as a rug or a piece of furniture (so-called up-cycle).

What we can see here is that Boomerang, just as other corporations, enacts a specific version of sustainability (Jones et al. 2008; Frostenson et al. 2010). For Boomerang sustainability is not primarily about consuming products that are labelled sustainable, but rather about buying things that last, re-using old things and re-cycling those that can no longer be reused. Thus, the specific “service” that Boomerang provides is that it enables its consumers to be sustainable while continuing to consume the (Boomerang) products they (presumably) enjoy so much. Boomerang allows consumers to construct a sustainable Scandinavian Preppy style.

Enacting the Green Scandinavian Preppy

What kind of green consumer is enacted through this marketing work and what sustainability role can this consumer play? Through the marketing work of Boomerang a version of the green consumer is enacted. Through the marketing carried out at the stores, websites, and media the Green Scandinavian Preppy is enacted. It is through this set of practices and artefacts that Boomerang’s specific model of the green consumers is brought to life.

This version of the green consumer has, as every version does, a specific set of qualities that define it. The design-interested nature-loving Boomerang consumer envisioned by this retailer and enacted by its marketing practices is a combination of the knowledgeable green connoisseur – a consumer that knows quality when he/she sees it – and the green hedonist in search of the good life (see, e.g., Soper 2007; Connolly & Prothero 2008). The Green Scandinavian Preppy is thus neither rebel nor activist. The model of the consumer enacted by this company is not political in the traditional sense. Instead he or she is a pleasure seeker with a green conscience. The green Scandinavian Preppy is someone (a white Swede) who wants to enjoy nature and go sailing. It is someone who knows quality and appreciates design and has the means to pay for both.

It is easy to see the benefits that this model of the green consumer has for the Boomerang Company. This company has much to gain commercially by enacting this version of the green consumer and hopefully (from its perspective) also configure consumers to act and feel in accordance with this model. Enacting the Green Scandinavian Preppy allows Boomerang to position itself as sustainable – receive positive press, add value to the brand, and perhaps even attract new customers – without having to make many changes to its current business practices. It can continue to manufacture and sell high-end and expensive fashion items very much in the same way it did before re-positioning itself as a sustainable fashion retailer. It can continue to sell the Scandinavian Preppy lifestyle that has worked so well in the past. The only difference is that now “green” is added to the mix.

The commercial and strategic benefits for Boomerang then seem obvious. But what does this model entail for the promotion of environmental sustainability? If

we accept that images are performative, that they have the possibility to configure consumers, to shape in some way how they act, think and feel, what then? Enacting the green consumer as a pleasure-seeking connoisseur can have important consequences for how consumers understand and approach sustainability.

On one hand, the green consumer as a pleasure-seeking connoisseur image can be a powerful agent that works to enlist consumers in green consumption. Because it resonates with central notions of contemporary consumer culture it may attract consumers that otherwise would not have been interested in sustainability issues. The Boomerang Company shows its consumers (and potential consumers) that it is possible to consume in a greener way. Through the marketing practices of this retailer consumers are assigned co-responsibility for the environment, both problem and solution (Heiskanen & Pantzar 1997; Halkier 1999), while at the same time showing these consumers that consuming green can be a pleasurable and rewarding experience. Green consumption is here not framed as difficult or complex. It does not seem to involve any sacrifice or trade-offs. This is, one can imagine, a seductive version of the green consumer.

On the other hand, there are also a number of potential drawbacks with the model of the green consumer enacted by the Boomerang Company. To begin with, as the green consumer is translated from activist/rebel and into a pleasure-seeking connoisseur, the image also loses much of its political force. For while a rebel fights against an established government or mainstream and an activist focuses on making change happen through action, a pleasure-seeking connoisseur is only concerned with choosing adequate products that reflect and develop a sophisticated taste and bring about pleasure. Here green consumption becomes something else. It becomes simply another way of enjoying ourselves and constructing our consumer identities.

Also, the message produced by the Boomerang Company (and other companies engaging in green marketing) is that environmental issues are to be approached primarily as consumer issues. More than this, it tells consumers that environmental issues are only relevant as long as they can be combined with the pleasurable consumption of desired products. In the process of marketing the Green Scandinavian Preppy this retailer is also reproducing “the idea that the individual consumer, making decisions to buy one product in preference to another, can painlessly and almost effortlessly create social and political change” (Low & Davenport 2007: 336). For the Green Scandinavian Preppy complicated environmental issues are simple. Achieving environmental sustainability is merely a matter of buying the right product. Through this marketing work the environmental critique – which often targets our whole way of life – is contained and made uncomplicated and manageable.

Discussion and Conclusions

In this paper a performativity approach is used to bring to the fore the manner in which marketing enacts specific images of green consumers and to discuss the performative capabilities of these images. More specifically, in this paper I have tried to do two things.

First I have tried to show how the green marketing work of a retailer – the Boomerang Company – leads to the reformulation of sustainability and the enactment of a specific version of the green consumer, here called the Green Scandinavian Preppy.

Second, departing from this analysis, I have discussed the potentials and limitations of this specific green consumer image. I have argued that while this is a version of the green consumer that might be appealing to consumers and thus have the potential to promote a version of green consumption, this is also a green consumer image that has lost much of its political power.

To be clear, the objective has not been to criticize Boomerang *per se*. This company and its marketing work is just an example of a broader phenomenon. Instead, my goal has been to illustrate how critical analysis of green consumer enactment can be accomplished and also demonstrate the importance of carrying out this type of analysis. That is, the ambition has been to develop an approach to the study of green consumer enactment and illustrate its importance.

Obviously the enactment of the Green Scandinavian Preppy model by the Boomerang Company does not mean that consumers will automatically adopt this model. As consumer culture studies have taught us, consumers do not simply passively receive and accept messages and products from organizations. Instead they actively translate and reconfigure them to fit into their practices and life projects (see, e.g. Miller 1995; Miller et al. 1998; Kozinets et al. 2002; Ilmonen 2004; Kozinets et al. 2004; Campbell 2005). It is thus very likely that a specific study of this retailer's customers and potential customers would reveal greater heterogeneity.

Nevertheless, as previous research has shown, the performative power of marketing is considerable (see e.g. Kjellberg & Helgesson 2006; Araujo 2007; Skålén et al. 2008; Fuentes 2011). Although no mass of Green Scandinavian Preppies will instantly emerge, the marketing work carried out by this retailer has the potential to shape how consumers understand and approach sustainability and consumption.

This is why we need to study the commercial enactment of green consumer images. By determining whom the green consumer is/should be we are also to some extent determining how sustainability is to be approached. And if retailers and other companies are through their marketing practices shaping (in some way) how we understand and approach sustainability, it is important to examine and critically discuss how this is accomplished and with what consequences.

Christian Fuentes is a senior lecturer at the Department of Service Management, Lund University and a researcher at the Centre for Consumer Science, University of Gothenburg. He undertakes research in the fields of green marketing, green consumption, critical marketing, practice theory and consumer culture. He is currently involved in a research project that examines the role of “ethical shopping apps” in the promotion of responsible consumption practices. E-mail: christian.fuentes@ism.lu.se

Notes

- ¹ This study has been conducted as part of the research project “Green Shops: sustainable retailing and value creating practices” 2011-2013 funded by Handels Utvecklingsråd.

References

- Araujo, Luis (2007): “Markets, Market-making and Marketing”, *Marketing Theory*, 7:3, 211-226.
- Araujo, Luis, Hans Kjellberg & Rob Spencer (2008): “Market Practices and Forms: Introduction to the Special Issue”, *Marketing Theory*, 8:1, 5-14.
- Barry, Andrew & Don Slater (2002): “Introduction: The Technological Economy”, *Economy and Society*, 31:2, 175-193.
- Callon, Michel (1991): “Techno-economic Networks and Irreversibility”, John Law (ed.), *A Sociology of Monsters: Essays on Power, Technology and Domination*, London and New York: Routledge, 132-161.
- (ed.) (1998): *The Laws of the Markets*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Callon, Michel, Yuval Millo & Fabian Muniesa (eds) (2007): *Market Devices*, Oxford: Blackwell
- Campbell, Colin (2005): “The Craft Consumer: Culture, Craft and Consumption in a Postmodern Society”, *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 5:23, 23-42.
- Cherrier, Hélène & Jeff B. Murray (2007): “Reflexive Dispossession and the Self: Constructing a Processual Theory of Identity”, *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, 10:1, 1-29.
- Cochoy, Franck (2009): “Driving a Shopping Cart from STS to Business, and the Other Way Round: On the Introduction of Shopping Carts in American Grocery Stores (1936-1959)”, *Organization*, 16:1, 31-55.
- Connolly, John & Andrea Prothero (2003): “Sustainable Consumption: Consumption, Consumers and the Commodity Discourse”, *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, 6:4, 275-291.
- (2008): “Green Consumption – Life-politics, Risk and Contradictions”, *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 8:1, 117-145.
- Cova, Bernard & Véronique Cova (2012): “On the Road to Prosumption: Marketing Discourse and the Development of Consumer Competencies”, *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, 15:2, 149-168.
- Crewe, Louise & Nicky Gregson (1998): “Tales of the Unexpected: Exploring Car Boot Sales as Marginal Spaces of Contemporary Consumption”, *Transactions in British Geography*, 23:1, 39-53.
- Crewe, Louise, Nicky Gregson & Kate Brooks (2003): “The Discursivities of Difference: Retro Retailers and the Ambiguities of ‘the Alternative’”, *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 3:1, 61-82.
- Fletcher, Kate (2012): “Durability, Fashion, Sustainability: The Processes and Practices of Use”, *Fashion Practice*, 4:2, 221-238.

- Fredriksson, Cecilia (2013): "Second-hand Values and the Making of a Green Fashion Eco-market", Lena Hansson, Ulrika Holmberg, Helene Brembeck (eds): *Making Sense of Consumption*, Göteborg: Centre for Consumer Science, Gothenburg University.
- Frostenson, Magnus, Sven Helin & Johan Sandström (2010): "CSR från webben till butiken: Etiska stödstrukturer för arbetstagare inom handeln", HUR: Forskningsrapport 7.
- Fuentes, Christian (2011): *Green Retailing: A Socio-material Analysis*, Doctoral Thesis, Lund university: Lund.
- (2014): "Green Materialities: Marketing and the Socio-material Construction of Green Products", *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 23:2, 105-116.
- Giddens, Anthony (1997): *Modernitet och självidentitet - självet och samhället i den senmoderna epoken*, Göteborg: Daidalos.
- Gregson, Nicky, Kate Brooks & Louise Crewe (2000): "Narratives of Consumption and the Body in the Space of the Charity/shop", Peter Jackson, Michelle Lowe, Daniel Miller & Frank Mort (eds): *Commercial Cultures: Economies, Practices, Spaces*, Oxford: Berg.
- Gregson, Nicky & Louise Crewe (1998): "Dusting Down Second Hand Rose: Gendered Identities and the World of Second-hand Goods in the Space of the Car Boot Sale", *Gender, Place and Culture*, 5:1, 77-100.
- Gössling, Stefan & Johan Hultman (eds) (2006): *Ecotourism in Scandinavia: Lessons in Theory and Practice*, Oxon, UK: CAB International.
- Halkier, Bente (1999): "Consequences of the Politicization of Consumption: The Example of Environmental Friendly Consumption Practices", *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*, 1:1, 25-41.
- Harrison, Rob, Terry Newholm & Deidre Shaw (2005): *The Ethical Consumer*, London: Sage.
- Heiskanen, Eva & Mika Pantzar (1997): "Toward Sustainable Consumption: Two New Perspectives", *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 20:4, 409-442.
- Hultman, Johan & Erika Andersson Cederholm (2006): "The Role of Nature in Swedish Ecotourism", Stefan Gössling & Johan Hultman (eds): *Ecotourism in Scandinavia: Lessons in Theory and in Practice*, Oxon, UK: CAB International, 76-88.
- Ilmonen, Kaj (2004): "The Use of and Commitment to Goods", *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 4:1, 27-50.
- Jones, Peter, Daphne Comfort & David Hillier (2008): "Moving Towards Sustainable Food Retailing?", *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, 36:12, 995-1001.
- Kent, Tony. (2007): "Creative Space: Design and the Retail Environment", *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, 35:9, 734-745.
- Kjellberg, Hans & Claes-Fredrik Helgesson (2006): "Multiple Versions of Markets: Multiplicity and Performativity in Market Practices", *Industrial Marketing Management*, 35:7, 839-855.
- (2007): "On the Nature of Markets and their Practices", *Marketing Theory*, 7:2, 137-162.
- Kozinets, Robert V., John F. Sherry JR., Diana Storm, Adam Duhachek, Kritinee Nuttavuthisit & Benét Deberry-Spence (2004): "Ludic Agency and Retail Spectacle", *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31:3, 658-672.
- (2002): "Themed Flagship Brand Stores in the New Millennium: Theory, Practice, Prospects", *Journal of Retailing*, 78:1, 17-29.
- Latour, Bruno (2000): "Where are the Missing Masses? – The Sociology of a Few Mundane Artifacts", Wiebe E. Bijker & John Law (eds): *Shaping Technology / Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 225-258.
- (2005): *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-network-theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Law, John (ed.) (1991): *A Sociology of Monsters: Essays on Power, Technology and Domination*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Law, John & John Urry (2004): "Enacting the Social", *Economy and Society*, 33:3, 390-410.
- Leonidou, Leonidas C., Constantinos N. Leonidou & Olga Kvasova (2010): "Antecedents and Outcomes of Consumer Environmentally Friendly Attitudes and Behaviour", *Journal of Marketing Management*, 26:13-14, 1319-1344.
- Licoppe, Christian (2010): "The 'Performativity Turn' in Science and Technology Studies", *Journal of Cultural Economy*, 3:2, 181-188.

- Low, William & Eileen Davenport (2007): "To Boldly Go...Exploring Ethical Spaces to Repoliticise Ethical Consumption and Fair Trade", *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 6:5, 336-348.
- Miller, Daniel (ed.) (1995): *Acknowledging Consumption*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Miller, Daniel, Peter Jackson, Nigel Thrift, Beverly Holbrook & Michael Rowlands (1998): *Shopping, Place and Identity*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Schröder, Monika J.A. & Morven G McEachern (2004): "Consumer Value Conflicts Surrounding Ethical Food Purchase Decisions: A Focus on Animal Welfare", *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 28:2, 168-177.
- Shaw, Deirdre, Edward Shiu & Ian Clarke (2000): "The Contribution of Ethical Obligation and Self-identity to the Theory of Planned Behaviour: An Exploration of Ethical Consumers", *Journal of Marketing Management*, 16:8, 879-894.
- Skålén, Per (2009): "Service Marketing and Subjectivity: The Shaping of Customer-oriented Employees", *Journal of Marketing Management*, 25:7-8, 795-809.
- Skålén, Per, Fougère, Martin & Markus Fellesson (2008): *Marketing Discourse: A Critical Perspective*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Soars, Brenda (2009): "Driving Sales through Shoppers' Sense of Sound, Sight, Smell and Touch", *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, 37:3, 286-298.
- Soper, Kate (2007): "Re-thinking the 'Good Life': The Citizenship Dimension of Consumer Disaffection with Consumerism", *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 7:2, 205-229.
- Tham, Mathilda (2008): *Lucky People Forecast: A Systemic Futures Perspective on Fashion and Sustainability*, London: Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Design Department, Goldsmiths, University of London.
- Thompson, Craig J. & Gocken Coskuner-Balli (2007): "Enchanting Ethical Consumerism: The Case of Community Supported Agriculture", *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 7:3, 275-303.
- (2007): "Countervailing Market Responses to Corporate Co-optation and the Ideological Recruitment of Consumption Communities", *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34:2, 135-152.
- Turley, L.W. & Ronald E. Milliman (2000): "Atmospheric Effects on Shopping Behavior: A Review of the Experimental Evidence", *Journal of Business Research*, 49:2 193-211.